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Turnout inequality
across post-industrial democracies:
why policy context matters

by

Hyunjin Oh

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Abstract

This dissertation studies differences in the levels of unequal participation across post-industrial democracies and the circumstances under which political inequality from the unequal distribution of socioeconomic resources is moderated. Existing studies generally conclude that low-income people are less likely to turn out to vote in advanced countries. Little attention has been devoted to examining the extent to which the turnout gap varies across countries or the reason why the turnout gap between the rich and the poor differs between countries. Furthermore, while previous studies have focused on institutional factors from the input-side of the democratic process, there are only a few studies that discuss the role of the output-side factors in shaping citizen's attitudes and behaviors. This study argues that it is important to examine conditioning effects of social policy context on the relationship between individual resources and voting. Drawing on the policy feedback literature, first I hypothesize that generous spending on active labor market policies may narrow the turnout gap between the rich and the poor by equalizing the opportunities and lowering the psychological hurdles to voting for the poor. Using survey data from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems on citizen's attitudes and participation across 27 OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries, I find that in countries with a higher spending on labor market activation, the turnout gap between the rich and the poor decreases. Second, the provision of childcare services also taps into social investment to activate women with young children across post-industrial democracies. I provide evidence for the hypothesis that

higher public spending on childcare services has a boosting effect on the participation of women, thereby attenuating another cleavage in turnout: gender gap. Finally, as psychological mechanisms mediating between public policy and political participation, I test whether ALMPs (Active Labor Market Policies) spending weakens the impact of income on participatory attitudes such as political efficacy, satisfaction with democracy, and partisan identification. Indeed, individuals in countries with a greater commitment to ALMPs report stronger political efficacy and psychological attachment to a political party. Taken together, the results show that the positive impact of labor market policies on people's participatory attitudes and electoral turnout is more powerful among the socially underprivileged. The findings of this study add to the literature of comparative political behaviors and policy research by jointly assessing micro and macro determinants of political participation and examining the ways in which social policy shapes individual political attitudes and participation.

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Introduction

Free and fair elections are the main characteristic of democracy. Through elections, citizens can choose their representatives, control their governments, and convey their preferences. The concept of democracy as the rule of the people signifies that every citizen, who is potentially affected by a decision, should have equal opportunities to affect it. The norm of political equality is attained through the means of maximum participation of all people (Pateman, 1970)[i].

When examining who votes and who does not, however, we encounter the reality that some citizens have greater resources and motivation to be politically active. Among individual-level determinants of political behavior, income is one of the major factors that contributes to disparities in political resources and action. It has been widely discussed that low-income citizens are less likely to vote (Beramendi & Anderson, 2008; Barnes & Kasse, 1979; Gallego. 2007, 2010; Verba et al., 1978, 1995). In general, those who are poor, low educated, or unemployed tend to engage less in politics. Yet, the degree to which such turnout inequality materializes varies across democracies (Gallego, 2015; Kasara & Suryanarayan, 2013; Stadelmann-Steffen, 2011; Makszin & Schneider, 2010). In some contexts, the turnout disparity between the rich and the poor is modest or narrower, while the slope of income gradient related to turnout is steeper in other

contexts. The empirical finding that the relationship between income and the propensity to vote varies across countries suggests that there are macro-level factors that determine different patterns of participatory inequality. As such, under what circumstances will turnout disparity due to the unequal distribution of socioeconomic resources be reduced or intensified?

To explain this cross-national variation, while much of the literature on voter turnout focuses on institutional and socioeconomic factors related to the "input"-side of the political process, little attention has been directed towards which "supply"-side contexts are more conducive for political mobilization among individuals experiencing economic disadvantages. In this study, I present that there is indeed significant cross-national variation in the impact of income on participation across OECD (The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries and argue that social policy shapes this micro-level variation. More specifically, I argue that public spending on labor market activation and public childcare programs, as integral parts of social policy in post-industrial democracies[ii], have a mobilizing effect on the political participation of low-status people and women (Figure 1-I).

Figure 1-I. Interaction between social policy and individual electoral participation
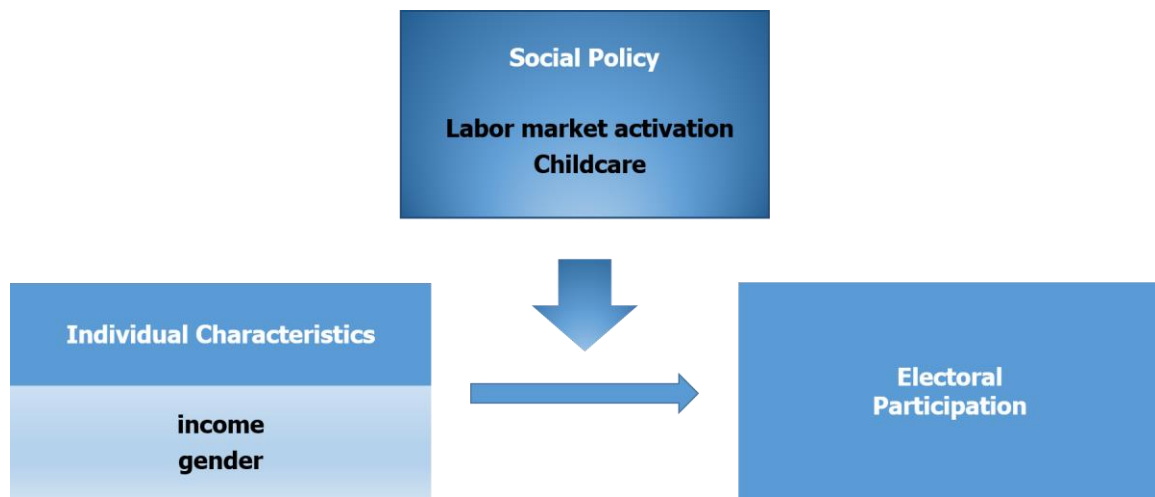
In order to probe the claim of whether public policy strengthens, weakens, or leaves unchanged the effects of socioeconomic characteristics measured by income or gender on political participation in each country, I incorporate ideas from the literature on policy feedback effects. The policy feedback approach emphasizes that policies can impact their recipients much like formal political institutions do. In general, policy feedback hypotheses rely on "the possibility that the social groups, values, and interests that structure citizens' thoughts and actions on the input side of the political system are, in turn, partly produces of the outcomes of previous democratic processes." (Kumlin & Rothstein, 2005: 343) In other words, participatory inequality must be understood as a condition that is inherently produced and reproduced by the conduct of public policy and its supply (or failure thereof) of policies providing for the equalization of political resources. More specifically, public policies, by actively seeking to reduce great inequalities or by failing to do so (e.g., if governments allow and thereby cause income gaps to widen, education opportunities to become massively unequal, and the precariousness of the labor market status to spread), shape citizens' willingness to participate in the electoral process and the actual use they make of their political rights.

In this dissertation, I analyze if and how individual resources and public policy interact to affect voter turnout. First, as discussed in Chapter 4, income-skewed inequalities in turnout are influenced by variations in a government's spending on job training, job creation, and employment incentives. More generous expenditure on these empowerment-oriented active labor market policies (ALMPs) decreases turnout inequality via more evenly distributed participatory attitudes between higher and lower -

status citizens. Two competing hypotheses will be tested. The *engagement by empowerment* hypothesis proposes that greater spending on active labor market policies narrows the turnout gap between income groups by equalizing the opportunities and lowering the psychological hurdles for political participation. Resource theory would imply that participation is more equal in generous welfare states because personal resources relevant for political participation are more evenly distributed, while more unequal societies aggravate income bias in the electorate by lowering incentives to participate under economic duress. In turn, the *engagement by discontent* hypothesis predicts that the turnout gap is smaller in unequal socioeconomic settings if citizens with low income are motivated to influence the electoral outcomes. In this case, it would support a conflict theory claiming that the low levels of social and economic equality provide a strong motivation for action by voting for political parties that are supportive of greater economic redistribution and social spending for outsiders in labor markets.

The impact of public policy on the political behavior of targeted group is also examined for the gender gap in turnout. Along with labor market activation, policies focusing on care services are a primary focus of the social investment agenda. Hence, investment in family-oriented services, as functionally equivalent to spending on labor market activation, is hypothesized to have a boosting effect on the participation of the targeted group, women.

If the effects of socioeconomic resources on political participation are better constrained in countries that spend more on social protection, in what ways can public policies elevate the level of political activity among the socially underprivileged and bring forth participatory equality? Public policies improve participatory equality by drawing people - the socially disadvantaged who lack necessary resources and access to politics - into the political arena beyond the level that their resources may allow. More importantly, I argue that public policy instills psychological resources that, from citizens' perspective, are critical for political action. As the primary psychological mechanisms that link public policy and the propensity to participate, I focus on three participatory attitudes: political efficacy, satisfaction with democracy, and partisan identification.

Using survey data from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) on citizens' attitudes and participation across 27 OECD countries, I examine whether social policy modifies skewed electoral participation. Using a multilevel model, I find that in countries with a higher spending on labor market activation, the turnout gap between the rich and the poor decreases. In addition, the cross-national analysis provides support for the hypothesis that state's investment on childcare services attenuates gender-based turnout disparity. With regard to participatory attitudes as mediating paths to political participation, I find that the strength of this generally positive correlation between income and participatory attitudes varies depending on the level of ALMPs spending. More specifically, I show evidence that the effect of income on political efficacy and on feeling a closeness to a party is considerably weakened in countries with higher ALMPs spending.

I contribute to the literature on comparative political behavior by focusing on the question of whether social policy modifies income-skewed electoral turnout. While existing studies show that turnout and political participation are higher in developed welfare states or countries with lower income inequality, they generally indicate that generous welfare states raise the overall turnout across the income level. It is still less clear if and how it affects the participation gap between the rich and the poor across countries. Put simply, I focus more on its distribution, rather than on the overall level of civic engagement. By assuming that the policy context influences various social groups differently with regard to their propensity to vote, I hypothesize and model the group-specific effect of social policy. I build on studies that have emphasized how the institutional, social and economic contexts narrow or widen the turnout gap among social groups with different resources and incentives to participate.[iii] In doing so, I join a growing stream of research on comparative political behavior that claims that we need to jointly assess the micro and macro determinants of political participation.[iv]

Previous studies have focused mainly on institutional factors (e.g. compulsory voting or the electoral system type) to explain the variation in voter turnout between and within countries (Blais, 2006), which are frequently termed as the input-side of the democratic process. On the other hand, there are fewer studies that discuss the "output" side of the political systems. By looking at broader sets of policies, I add to the policy feedback literature regarding the effects of policies on mass publics. While many have studied the effects of specific policies for target groups in single countries (e.g., the United States), fewer studies apply the policy feedback framework to broader policy sets

across many countries. By assessing the role of the state in enhancing or driving out citizens' participation, this study also suggests ways to increase the involvement of low-status groups when they fail to vote.

In summary, I examine how citizens' propensity to engage in political participation is affected by policy context, whether social policies have a role in the reduction of turnout disparity, and the extent to which this relationship is mediated by political attitude. The central research questions are as follow:

1. To what extent does the effect of income (gender) on voter turnout differ across advanced countries?

2. To what extent does public spending on empowerment-oriented ALMPs (childcare services) diminish participatory inequality across income (gender) lines?

3. What psychological mechanisms link social policy and political participation?

The structure of this study is as follows. The next chapter provides an overview of unequal turnout across OECD countries. Then, I review the current literature on unequal participation and existing studies on the relationship between public policy and political participation. The study proceeds with a presentation of the theoretical framework and the formulation of rival hypotheses that predict how the relationship between income and

voter turnout is modified by equity in the welfare state. Subsequently, I present the data and the empirical design for this study's quantitative analyses. The data included four waves of the Comparative Studies of Electoral Systems across 27 OECD countries. Thereafter, I show the results of multilevel regression models with cross-level interactions that were employed to test hypotheses regarding how public expenditures on labor market activation modify the relationship between income and turnout. Additionally, I examine the marginal effects of spending on participation for different income groups to test whether a uniform effect is exerted across groups, or if the effect varies in strength or direction depending on income. I then discuss the main findings of the study's quantitative analyses. Next, I assess whether the relationship between gender and voting is modified depending on the levels of public spending on childcare services. After probing the hypotheses on participation, I provide evidence showing how spending on labor market activation alters the social stratification of participatory attitudes. The final chapter summarizes the entire argument and discusses this study's limitations and implications for comparative political behaviors and policy feedback research.

[i] The minimalist view on democracy raised concerns over the dangers of mass participation and its perceived association with totalitarianism (Schumpeter, 1942). It is argued that participation needs to be kept at a minimum in order to protect society from poorly informed citizens and bad political decision.

[ii] According to Esping-Andersen (1999), social policy is the "public management of social risk"(36).

[iii] Much research has shown that different political institutions influence the turnout gap between, for example, generally disadvantaged and advantaged groupings (Anduiza, 2002), politically interested and uninterested (Soderlund et al, 2011), more and less knowledgeable (Fischer et al, 2008) and highly and lesser educated (Gallego, 2010). The socioeconomic context (economic inequality) may have a similar conditional effect on the turnout gap between high-and low-income groups (Solt, 2008).

[iv] E.g. Anduiza, 2002; Franklin, 2004; Anderson & Singer, 2008; Karp & Banducci, 2008; Kittlson & Schwindt-Bayer, 2010; Klingeman, 2009.

Chapter 2

Unequal Turnout across OECD Countries

Introduction

A recent decline in voter turnout has raised concern about electoral stratification.[i] From the late 1970s onwards, turnout levels gradually decreased in advanced democracies, resulting in a 10 % decline between 1950 and 2005 (Gray & Kittilson, 2000). However, while the decrease in turnout is alarming, the real trouble for representative democracy is that turnout is increasingly unequal. Whereas previous research indicated that substantial socioeconomic inequality in turnout existed, especially in the United States (Powell, 1986; Topf, 1995), recent studies reveal that it is rapidly increasing outside the United States. Furthermore, turnout decline is particularly evident among economically disadvantaged and vulnerable population groups (Kittlson, 2005; Keaney & Rogers, 2006; Solt, 2008; Birch et al., 2013, Offe, 2014). Therefore, we can claim that as turnout decreased, socio-economic determinants of voter participation became more critical, such as income, education, and age. In the United Kingdom, for instance, the difference in turnout between earners in the top quartile and those in the bottom quartile almost doubled between 1964 and 2005. Similarly, the discrepancy in turnout between older and younger age groups nearly doubled between 1970 and 2005 (Keaney & Rogers, 2006).

In consideration of this circumstance, this chapter focuses on the cross-national variation of unequal voter turnout.[ii] *Turnout inequality* can be defined as "the systematic difference in the electoral participation of socially advantaged and disadvantaged groups" (Gallego, 2015: 13). In most countries, voting is a voluntary activity; as such, people can freely choose not to vote. However, differences in motivation among individuals should not be considered a problematic source of turnout inequality[iii]: "If some citizens do not participate because they freely choose not to be active… then participatory inequalities do not compromise democracy." (Verba et al., 1995: 26). Individual decisions to abstain from participation in elections do not, by themselves, constitute a source of inequality. Voter turnout is unequal *only if* the relevant social and political characteristics of voters and nonvoters differ (Verba et al., 1995).

Over the last decades, turnout inequality induced by a lack of structural resources (e.g., education and income) or by ascribed characteristics (e.g., gender) has been a concern for the egalitarian, democratic ideal of representation. Scholars have expressed apprehension about the consequences of lower-status persons voting less frequently than higher-status individuals. The presence of systematic differences between voters and non-voters may result in imbalanced responsiveness of government to conflicting groups, and thus bias the representative process in favor of the privileged (Anduiza, 2002; Jacobs & Skocpol, 2005; Bartels, 2008; Gilens, 2005, 2011; Solt, 2008, 2011). More worryingly, unequal turnout unleashes a vicious cycle of disaffection and underrepresentation among those groups with limited participation. As policies become less responsive to their interests, such groups will increasingly assume that politics does not pertain to them. This

downward spiral permanently excludes these citizens from electoral life (Birth et al., 2013: 2). In his classic account of non-voting, Schattschneider argues that voters choose the route of "massive self-disenfranchisement" when the political agenda ceases to reflect their needs and concerns (Schattschneider, 1960: 102). Additionally, in a study of public opinion, Diamond and Lodge (2013) have observed a hardening of a "conservative bias" in social attitudes towards welfare reform. They warned of the danger that growing inequalities in electoral participation might further entrench the welfare status quo (i.e., the pull of the gray vote) and heighten the onset of the intergenerational and distributional conflict.

Figure 2-I. Diagram of a vicious circle of unequal turnout
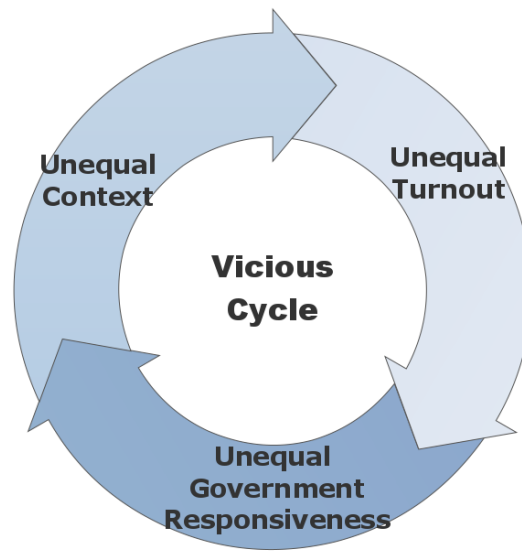
While there are multiple sources of social disadvantages, this study focuses specifically on inequalities in participation related to *income.* Among the other socioeconomic and demographic characteristics that serve as a predictor of voter participation, income is one of the most clear-cut resources needed for political participation (Li et al., 2003; Ruiter, 2008). Because low-income citizens direct their focus towards their everyday problems, they tend to be less politically involved. Also, income is the main eligibility criteria for social protection and is more clearly linked to a resource effect, while the individual level of education is not always a good indicator for welfare state dependency. The lower income group typically comprises the primary recipients of welfare state services and the resources that welfare state provides them for everyday life can potentially encourage their political engagement.

It should be noted that inequality in voter participation is a characteristic of contexts, not of people. While decisions to participate in political activities are made by individuals, inequality in turnout is an aggregate phenomenon (Gallego, 2015). Turnout can be highly unequal in a country, city, region, or other entity that holds elections. On the contrary, the concept of unequal participation cannot be applied to a single person. At the individual level, demographic and socioeconomic characteristics influence the decision to vote. It is when we pool individuals that we become capable of determining the extent to which socioeconomic characteristics are related to the decision to vote and whether or not inequality in participation exists.

In the following section, I first briefly highlight the most important micro-macro determinants of political participation discussed in the literature. Thereafter, I introduce a 'supply-side' explanation of unequal turnout and characteristics of labor market activation as my primary macro-level variable.

Previous Research on Unequal Participation

According to the literature, political attitudes and behavior depend on both micro- and macro-level characteristics.[iv] Dahlberg and Solevid (2013) argue that descriptions for unequal participation can be categorized into three different groups: individual explanations, institutional explanations, and contextual explanations.

Among the individual level explanations, the resources perspective offers an interesting account of the origins of turnout inequality (Scholzman et al., 1999; Verba et al., 1995; Wilson & Musick, 1998). At the micro level, the lack of personal resources constrains the possibility of citizens' participation. These resources include, for example, financial means, cognitive abilities, and social skills. Citizens with insufficient resources have fewer means to meet the requirements of becoming and staying involved in politics (Scholzman et al., 1999; Verba et al., 1995), so their opportunities are limited. On the other hand, citizens with abundant resources are more likely to participate: they have money to register or donate, time to spend on campaigns, and furthermore, social and political skills for the political activities. Studies focusing on individual-level

explanations often reach the same conclusion: that is, citizens with more economic and cognitive resources participate in the voting process to a greater extent than citizens with fewer resources. Additionally, citizens with more socioeconomic resources have more cognitive skills and tend to be more motivated because they have greater political interest and stronger party identification. It is also plausible that a recruiting network surrounds such voters, which altogether leads to a higher turnout (Verba et al., 1995).

In a comparative perspective, however, individual level explanations are of less importance.[v] While extensive studies claim that a link exists between socioeconomic status and voting, there have been insufficient attempts to explain a cross-national variation of this link. The strength of this generally positive correlation between income and participation does vary depending on the context in which an individual is situated (Makszin & Saunders, 2014: 7; Widestrom, 2008).

Instead, macro-level characteristics are more imperative since they can modify an individual's cost of voting to a greater extent (Franklin, 2004). First, the institutional approach focuses on the rules of the game in which elections take place. Variation in the institutional and political environment of elections has consequences for overall voter turnout (Blais, 2006; Geys, 2006; Jackman & Miller, 1995; Franklin, 2004; Powell, 1986). Institutional features that affect the information and decision costs for voting can significantly depress or foster voter participation of low-income people, who have fewer resources to pay for those costs. Of the institutional level explanations, previous studies

usually confirm that countries with compulsory voting and PR (Proportional representation) systems have a higher turnout. In addition, higher turnout can be promoted by a higher voting age and facilities that ease voting (e.g., postal voting) (Blais, 2006). Also, the election context specific explanations (e.g., features of a specific election such as decisiveness, competitiveness and campaign intensity) have been shown to be more important compared to the individual level explanations as to why voters in one country turn out in greater numbers than voters in another country. As Franklin notes, the more that is at stake, the higher the turnout (Franklin, 2004).

Another group of macro-level accounts argues that the degree of turnout inequality depends on the strength of organizations, such as left-wing parties and trade unions that mobilize lower-status groups[vi] (Verba et al., 1978; Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993), or on a party's strategic incentives to mobilize lower-status groups (Jusko, 2011). Notably, Verba et al. (1978) argue that cross-national variation in participatory inequality depends on how politically organized lower-status groups are. Moreover, Karen Jusko (2011) provides a detailed mobilization account of unequal participation from a comparative perspective. She examines the circumstances in which political parties have strategic incentives to mobilize the poor electorally. Her argument is that unequal turnout depends on the legislators' and political parties' incentives to mobilize low-income voters politically, which in turn depend on electoral geography, the joint distribution of voters and seats across electoral districts. The more electoral power the poor have, i.e., the higher the percentage of seats they could secure if they all voted for the same party, the more parties have incentives to mobilize them.

While mobilization targeted to disadvantaged groups can be a powerful force in creating equal participation, in theory, political mobilization can also exacerbate inequality, rather than reduce it. The privileged are in many contexts better organized politically than the disadvantaged and hence more likely to be in the kind of organizations where mobilization occurs (Morales, 2009). Political parties also target higher-status individuals in their mobilization efforts (Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993).

While these institutional and organizational explanations abound, they are only of limited use for explaining cross-country variation of within-country inequality patterns. They rest on the assumption that the determinant of voter turnout has the same effect on all citizens. The main shortcoming of the mobilization account on unequal participation is that there has been limited comparative research on whether variation in the strength of specific organizations is associated with unequal participation cross-nationally.

Overall, the effect of individual characteristics is not necessarily the same in all settings, and the effect of systemic incentives to participate is not always identical for everyone. On the one hand, individual incentives play a major role in some contexts, while making little difference in others. On the other hand, the characteristics of the institutional setting do not have the same effect on the likelihood of voting for all citizens (Anduiza, 2002: 644). As Gallego (2015: Chapter 3) suggests, the most promising avenue to understand variation in unequal turnout is to determine the factors that might affect the

poor and the rich's participation heterogeneously. A heterogeneous effect is defined as a factor that mainly fosters the involvement of lower-status groups without increasing or moderately enhancing the participation of the wealthy. It thereby has the capacity to mobilize large numbers of the lower-status people. Any contextual feature that only mobilizes members of one income group to vote, while not affecting members of the other, will have a high potential to shape unequal participation. As such, which features have heterogeneous consequences? One way to assess whether a contextual characteristic has heterogeneous effects on participation is to examine if it moderates (i.e., intensifies or weakens) the association of income and voter turnout. Is the income-participation correlation smaller or larger in the presence of a contextual characteristic? An interactive multilevel model with individuals at the first level and contextual characteristics at the second level, can be used to answer this question. It tests the hypothesis that contextual characteristics modify the association between income and voting.

Since I seek to explore cross-country variation of within-country inequality patterns, it is necessary to place micro-level determinants into macro-level contexts. Such interactions have been attempted, but still remain rare (See e.g. Anduiza, 2002; Gallego, 2007, 2008, 2015; Makszin & Schneider, 2010; Shore, 2012; Kasara and Suryanarayan, 2013). Rather than focusing on the usual macro-level suspects from the 'input-side' approach, I turn to the 'supply-side' determinant of political participation and propose a so-far surprisingly neglected country characteristic as the driving force behind the cross-country variation of within-country turnout inequality: 'empowerment-oriented' active labor market policies (ALMPs). While there is a broad range of state interventions that

may perhaps make participation more equal across social groups, I argue that the 'empowerment-oriented' public programs provide greater resources and the feeling of being integrated for the poor, low educated, or unemployed who are often on the lower-end of the income scale. One unique feature of ALMPs is protection from the danger of being unemployed. Once laid off, it is highly difficult to get back into the job market, which gets especially worse when there exist a two-tiered labor market as detailed in the literature on labor market dualism. Moreover, the lower income people have a greater dependence upon a generous social spending. They are more directly subject to political decisions, for it is the government that determines the degree of protection of labor from economic fluctuations or grants the opportunity to upgrade work skills. Empowerment-oriented ALMPs, such as training programs, job creation, and employment incentives schemes, are important policy instruments in integrating unemployed and under-employed individuals into the labor market and securing a decent living for them. It seeks to elevate not only the employability of labor-market outsiders but also a sense of togetherness and social cohesion by redistributing socioeconomic risks (Lister, 2007). This is radically different from the situation where the degree of social protection against new risks is generally lower.

In the next chapter, I will provide a more thorough discussion of how public policy shapes mass opinion and behavior, and will address why ALMPs spending is conducive to the participation of lower-status groups. Before proceeding, I use a graphical approach to illustrate that there is indeed considerable variation in the extent to which participation is unequal across elections.

Voter Turnout by Income Level around OECD Countries

The primary dataset used in this study contains the pooled four waves of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) dataset. Because of its global scope and the effort made to ensure the comparability of the variables, the CSES is one of the highest-quality academic surveys available for comparative electoral research. I restricted elections to the OECD countries because the motives and incentives for voting or abstaining in less developed democracies differ. The pooled dataset contains data for 97,366 respondents who were interviewed after 78 different elections held between 1996 and 2015 in 27 OECD countries.

As seen in Figure 2-II, there is no doubt that participation is highly unequal in the United States, which uses data from the CSES for the 1996, 2004, and 2008 presidential elections. Income is coded as five categories from the lowest to the top quintile. On average, 76 % of the survey respondents in the United States reported turnout. About 63 % of Americans in the lowest income quintile voted in the presidential elections. By contrast, 88 % of those in the highest income quintile voted. The turnout gap between the rich and the poor is more than 20 %.

FIGURE 2-II. The mean reported voter turnout in the United States for 1996, 2004, 2008

elections. Source: CSES
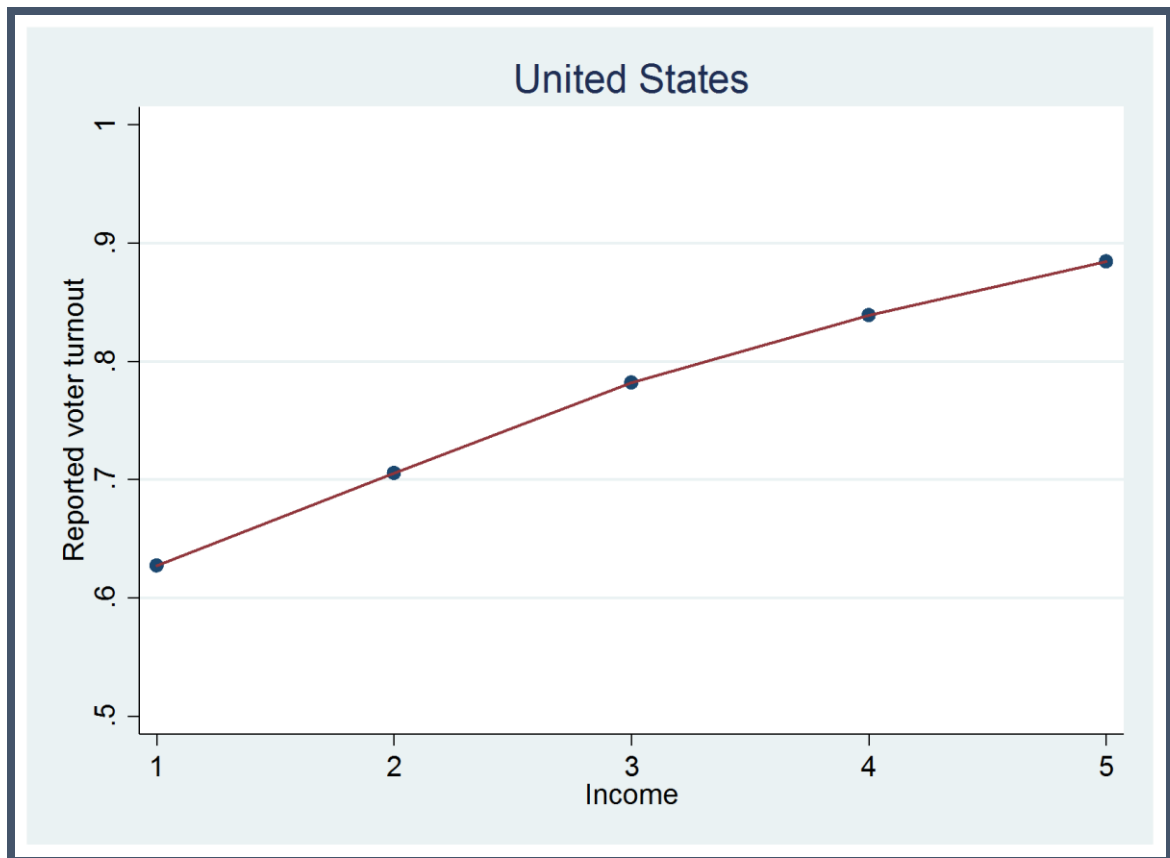
Notably, the results indicate that low-income citizens vote just as frequently as high-income citizens in many other countries. Denmark, where voting is voluntary, can be regarded as a contrasting example. Figure 2-III displays the mean reported voter turnout rates by income level using data from the CSES for the parliamentary elections in 1998, 2001, and 2007. On average, 97 % of the survey respondents reported that they turned out to vote in elections. The contrast with the American case is striking. A total of 95 % of low-income citizens indicated that they voted. The voter turnout rate of the high-income group is very similar: 98 % of respondents stated that they voted in the parliamentary elections. The turnout gap between the lowest and the highest income quintile is only 2.7 %.

FIGURE 2-III. The mean reported voter turnout in Denmark for 1998, 2001, 2007 elections.

Source: CSES
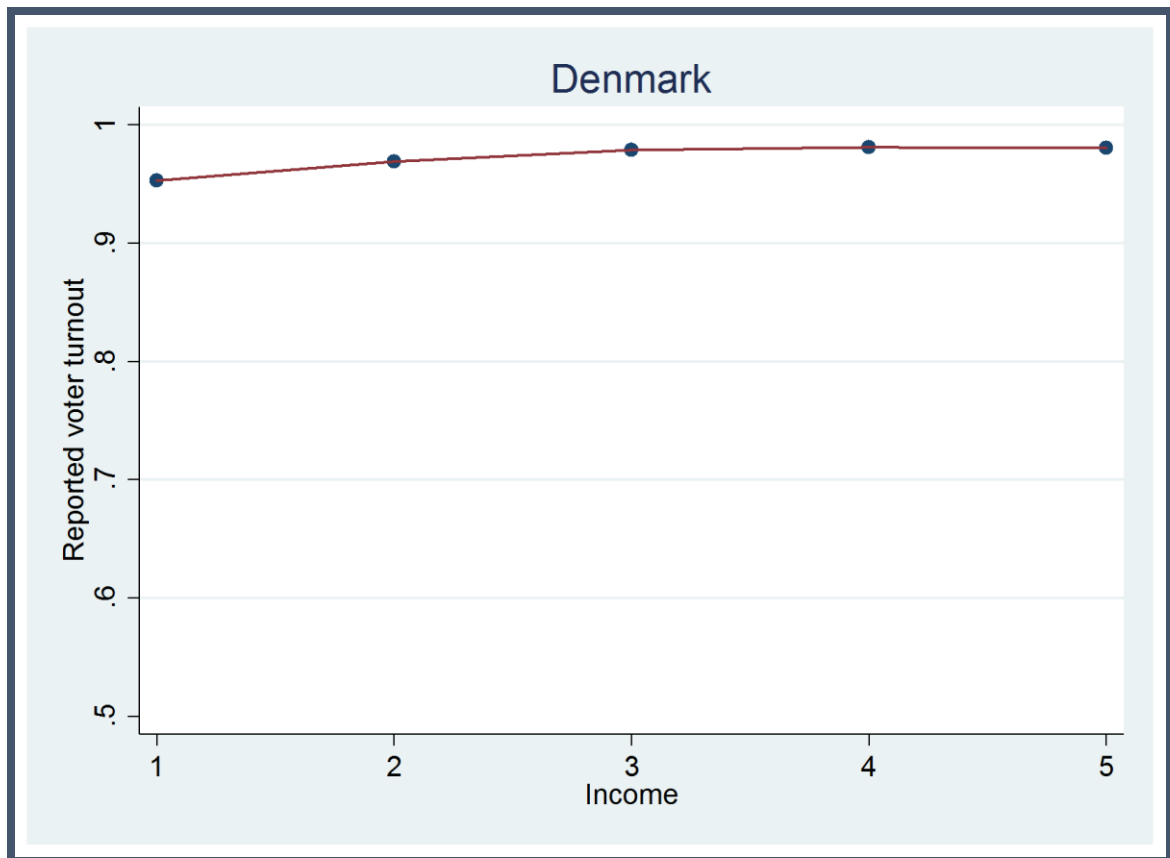
The discrepancy between the American and the Danish cases illustrates the claim that voter turnout is not unequal everywhere, which is to say that turnout is not necessarily unequal. This positive association between income and voter participation is not universal. Instead, it varies across countries, to the extent that income is a perhaps strong predictor of participation in some elections, but there is no correlation at all in others. Some studies suggest that inequality in voter participation is an "American exceptionality" (e.g., Verba et al., 1978; Powell, 1986; Topf, 1995). Hence, a substantial number of prior studies suggest that turnout inequality is, or used to be, rare outside the United States. However, not just in the United States but also in a few other advanced industrial democracies, there are sizable gaps in the turnout rates of high and low-income people. On the other hand, in many other contexts, there are literally no differences in turnout rates across income groups.

Figure 2-IV gives an overview of turnout rates according to income levels across OECD countries. The graph displays the mean reported turnout rates in each country, split by income level. When data for more than one election were available for one country, the individual datasets were merged. While it is useful to summarize information and collapse all surveys gathered in the same country for the purpose of graphical illustration, the unit of analysis is an election, not a country, throughout this study. As mentioned above, income is coded into five categories. A total of 18 % of respondents belong to the lowest income quintile. Another 21 % of respondents are located at the second lowest income quintile. Additionally, 22 % and 20 % of respondents are in the third and fourth quintiles, respectively. Finally, 19 % of respondents belong to the highest

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income category. In the majority of countries in which income is associated with voting, the relationship is monotonic and increases linearly.

FIGURE 2-IV. The mean reported voter turnout in 27 OECD countries
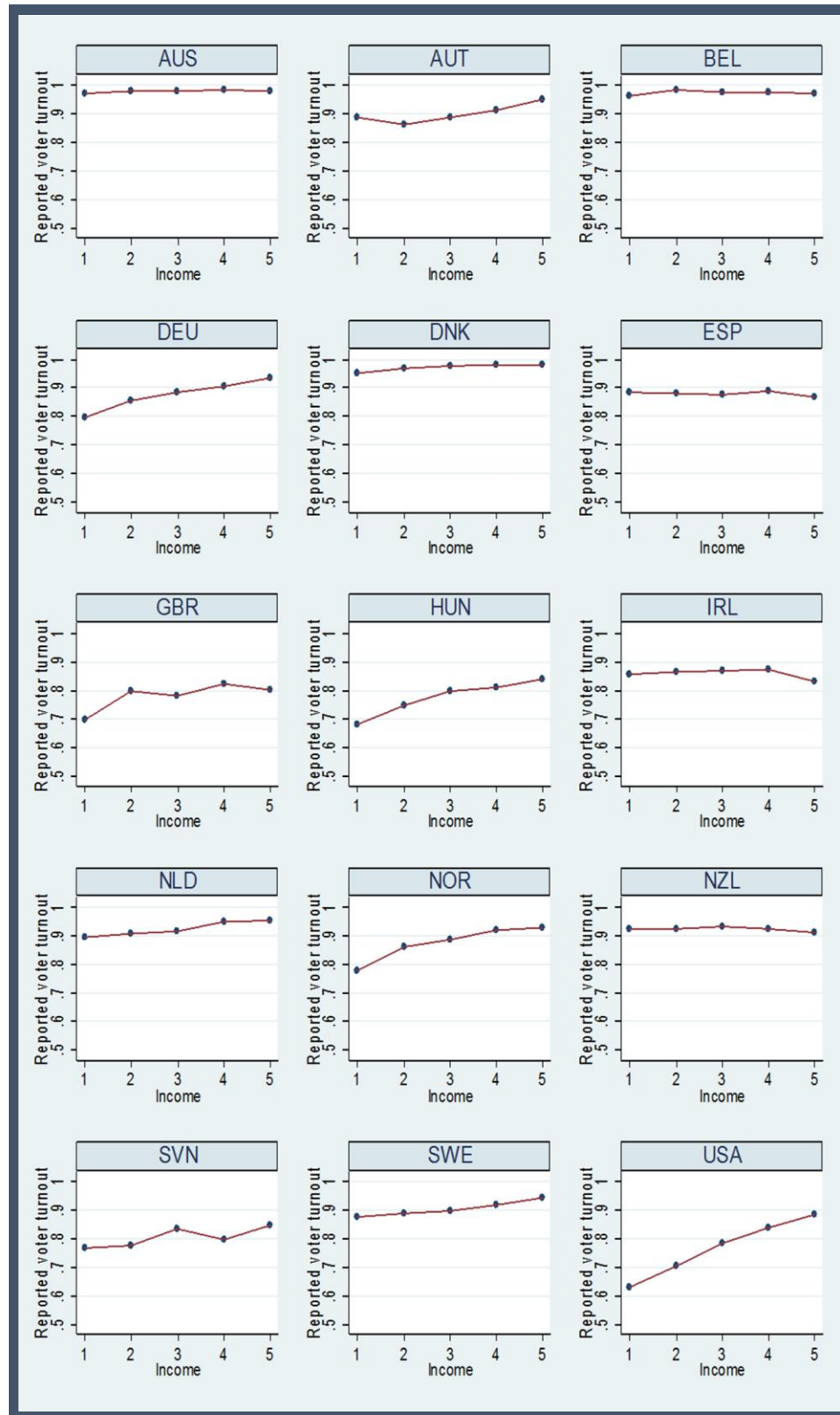
FIGURE 2-IV. The mean reported voter turnout in 27 OECD countries (continued)
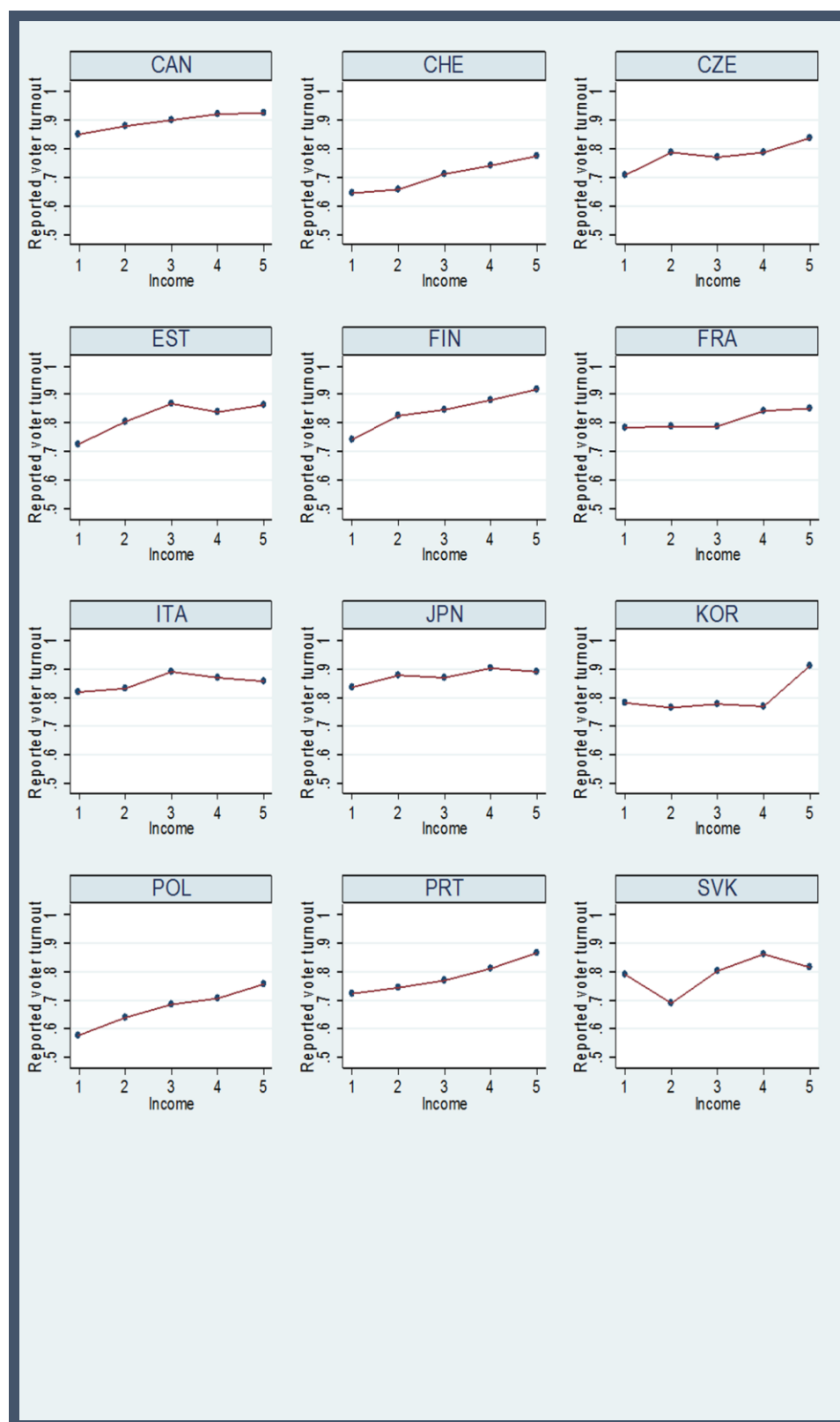
This graph makes clear that contrary to some characterizations, there is no United States-versus-the-rest dichotomy. What also stands out from this illustration is that turnout is not unequal everywhere. There is a broad range of cross-national variation in the probability of voting among voters with the lowest level of income. Indeed, there is wide variation across countries in the gradient of the income effect. For example, low-income individuals are substantially underrepresented, while the high-income group shows high rates of participation, both in the United States and in Poland. The difference between turnout among the poorest and the richest quintiles is 25.7% in the United States and 17.9% in Poland. The bivariate relationship between income and electoral participation is also substantial in Finland (17.8%), Hungary (15.9%), Norway (15.1%), and Portugal (14.5%). On the contrary, this difference between income groups is below 10% in countries like Denmark (2.8%), Italy (3.8%), the Netherlands (5.6%), Sweden (6.6%), France (6.6%), and Austria (6.2%). It is also negative, as in the case with New Zealand (-1%), Spain (-1.9%), and Ireland (-2.5%). This descriptive analysis of electoral turnout by income groups reveals that countries differ not only in respect to the level of aggregate voter turnout but also in regard to the social stratification of electoral turnout.

This existence of variation in the degree to which participation is unequal across contexts is a relevant point of departure for comparative research. Rather than being inevitable, unequal participation is *contingent* on institutional, political, or social characteristics. This insight opens the opportunity for comparative study to analyze why electoral participation is equal in some contexts but not in others. Conceivably, better knowledge of this phenomenon can present ways to increase the involvement of low-

status groups where they fail to vote, which can bring us closer to the democratic ideal of equal participation.

Measuring Turnout Inequality

After inspecting the actual data, the focus turns to how to create a summary measure of turnout inequality. One approach is quite simply to estimate the relationship between income and voter participation in a regression framework. Because the dependent variable can take only two values (1 for voting or 0 for nonvoting), simple logistic regression is used. The β coefficient takes on a different value in each election survey. If income is not associated with the probability of voting, the value of the coefficient is close to 0, and participation is equal. Hence, the gradient of the relationship between income and voting is flat. In elections in which the association between income and voting is secure, this coefficient takes on a positive value. Estimating the strength of the relationship between income and voter turnout across elections provides a way to measure turnout inequality. In an extension of this approach, in multilevel models used in later chapters, the coefficient of interest will be the interaction between income at the individual level and contextual variable measured at the level of the election or the country.

Logistic regression coefficients, however, are not directly interpretable. Transforming them into predicted probabilities or marginal effects allows us to assess the magnitude of the changes in voting associated with increases in income. Importantly, relatively large logistic regression coefficients are compatible with substantively small differences in the predicted turnout rates of the rich and the poor if overall turnout rates are high and close to the 100 % ceiling of the turnout. This implies that when using logistic models, coefficients should not be directly interpreted (Gallego, 2015: 27). Rather, it is necessary to transform the coefficients and interpret the results regarding predicted probabilities. For this reason, I use a graphical approach to interpret the results of multilevel models throughout this study.

Figure 2-V displays the predicted probabilities to vote for each income quintile calculated from a logistic regression model of voter turnout for 27 OECD countries. As expected, the size of the gap in the turnout rates of the bottom and the top income quintile is substantial and amounts to 15 percentage points (63-78).[vii]

FIGURE 2-V. Predicted probability of voting by income in 27 OECD countries. Source: CSES cumulative dataset. Weighted for actual turnout rates.
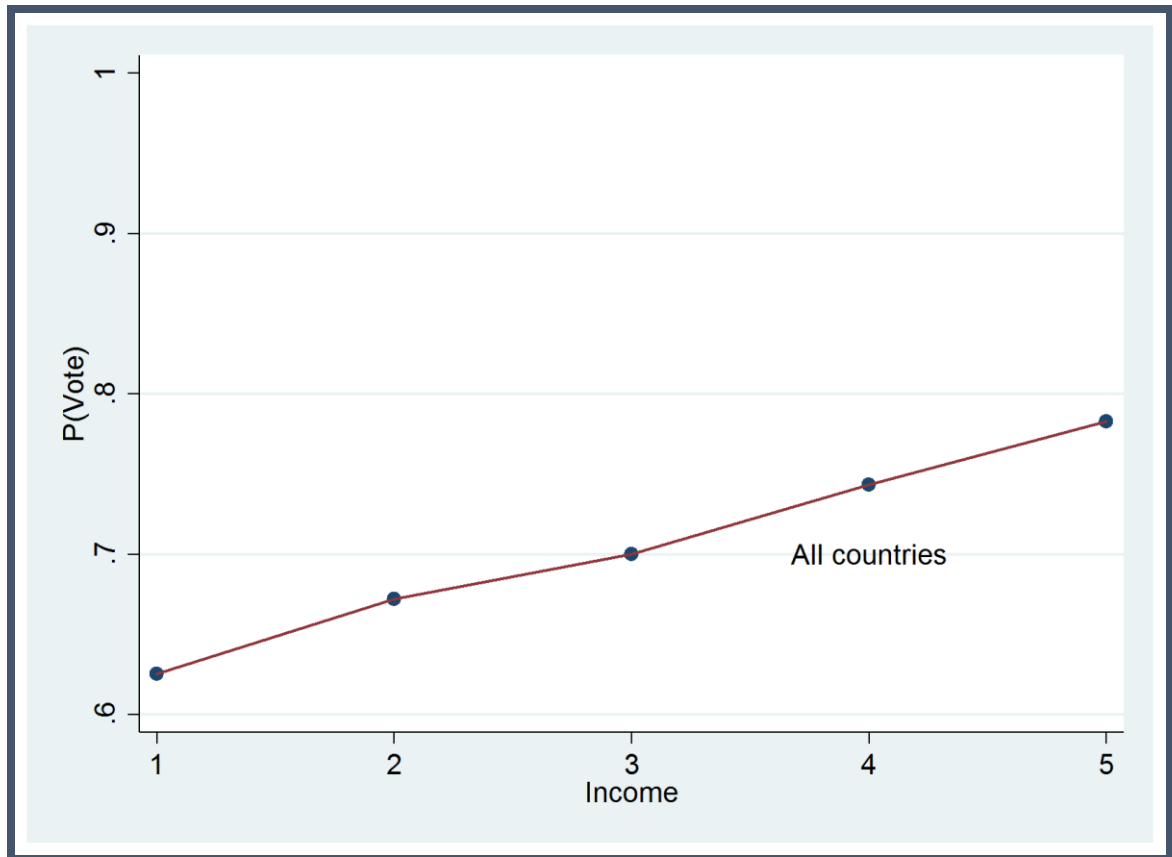
Figure 2-VI describes unequal participation defined as the relationship between income and voting as estimated from logistic regression models for *each* of 78 elections included in the dataset. The lines are the predicted probabilities of voting plotted against income levels. When participation is equal, the gradient of the relationship between income and voter turnout is flat. Conversely, highly unequal contexts exhibit steep gradients.

FIGURE 2-VI. Predicted probability of voting by income in seventy-eight elections. Source: CSES cumulative dataset. Weighted for actual turnout rates.

FIGURE 2-VI. Predicted probability of voting by income in seventy-eight elections. Source: CSES cumulative dataset. Weighted for actual turnout rates. (continued)

FIGURE 2-VI. Predicted probability of voting by income in seventy-eight elections. Source: CSES cumulative dataset. Weighted for actual turnout rates. (continued)

FIGURE 2-VI. Predicted probability of voting by income in seventy-eight elections. Source: CSES cumulative dataset. Weighted for actual turnout rates. (continued)

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FIGURE 2-VI. Predicted probability of voting by income in seventy-eight elections. Source: CSES cumulative dataset. Weighted for actual turnout rates. (continued)

As expected, the association between income and voter participation is strongest in American elections. The predicted probabilities of the voting of the lowest income group in the 2008 election were 35 %. For highest income group, these probabilities were 69 %. Thus, the estimated income gap in voter participation is, over 34 percentage points. Poland also has vast turnout inequalities. In the 2007 election studied, the predicted probability of voting for citizens with low income was 37 %, whereas a person who is in the top income quintile had a much higher predicted probability to vote at 70 %. Therefore, the estimated turnout gap is 33 percentage points. In Finland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Norway, the difference in the predicted turnout rates of the high and low-income group is also significant at over 20 percentage points.

Conversely, the relationship between income and voting is weak to nonexistent in a varied group of countries. For example, the differences in the predicted turnout rates of people with the lowest and highest level of income never exceed 10 percentage points in Denmark, Austria, France, Italy, Belgium, and Australia. In a few elections, as in Spain, Ireland, and New Zealand, the poor citizens even vote more frequently than the rich people. Participation in these countries is roughly equal across income groups.

A set of countries has medium-sized gaps in the estimated turnout rates due to income. The size of the gaps is not smaller than 10 percentage points, but it is not as large as those found in the countries with the greatest inequalities in voter participation. The countries with moderate levels of inequality are Canada, Germany, Great Britain,

Estonia, Portugal, Sweden, and the Netherlands. Higher income groups vote more frequently than lower income groups in these countries, but the differences are only mildly significant.

Finally, a set of countries, such as South Korea and Slovenia, is harder to classify because the size of turnout gaps varies from election to election. There are both elections with subtle turnout gaps and elections with moderate turnout gaps. The presence of substantial discrepancies in the turnout gaps within the same country would shed some doubt on the validity of this measure of unequal turnout, but a scrutiny of this group indicates that the estimates are sensible. For instance, in the 2000 Korean election, there was a minute difference in the turnout rates of the least and most affluent. This pattern may reflect the mobilization of the low income, dissatisfied voters after the financial crisis of 1997. Public dissatisfaction with current politics and deepening economic hardship culminated in the surprising parliamentary election results and the ruling party's failure to retain a parliamentary majority of 150, for the first time in Korean history. Reassuringly, this group of countries is small. Differences in the size of the gaps between elections can be due to idiosyncratic measurement variability, different mobilization patterns in the electorate, and specific characteristics of the election.

Implications

This chapter has documented that there is a considerable variation in the extent to which participation is unequal across OECD countries. Turnout is extremely unequal in the United States and Poland, where low-income citizens turn out to vote in elections at rates that are about 30 percentage points lower than those of citizens with a high income. Income disparity in voting, on the contrary, is utterly absent in other contexts, including in Denmark, Austria, and Spain. Low-income citizens vote just as frequently in elections as the rich people, even in many countries that do not have compulsory voting. Many other cases fall in between, and the correlation between income and voting is visible but modest.

The fact that variation exists has relevant implications. If unequal participation were universal, we would perhaps conclude that it seems to come from the built-in dilemma of democratic political life, which is difficult to redress. Even strong proponents of political equality would have to concede that some degree of inequality in participation is unavoidable. If achieving equal participation were impossible, there would be less reason to look for causes and remedies in the political, institutional, and economic environments in which people live.

Unequal participation is, however, not universal. The fact that participation is equal in some places is the best possible proof that equal participation is something

attainable in a democratic system. This finding implies that there is a room for improvement in societies that have large turnout inequalities. It becomes increasingly important to understand what produces variation in unequal turnout.

[i] In contrast, recent studies suggest that the downward spiral in figures for traditional, institutionalized participation is offset at least in part by the increase in the relative importance of informal and personal forms of social connection and civic engagement (Stolle & Hooghe, 2009). Research found a steady growth in the number of people involved in emerging forms of civic engagement outside the institutionalized sphere of politics, such as internet campaigns, ad-hoc protests, political consumerism, and lifestyle politics (Dalton, 2004, 2008; Inglehart & Catterberg, 2003; Norris, 2002; Dalton & Scarrow, 2004; Stolle & Hooghe, 2005; Stolle, Hooghe & Michelletiti, 2005). However, emerging forms of participation can lead to more political inequality than for the conventional forms of participation. As Skocpol (2004) notes, "the gains in voice and public leverage have mainly accrued to the top tiers of U.S. society while Americans who are not wealthy or higher-educated now have fewer associations representing their values and interests, and enjoy dwindling opportunities for active participation." (Skocpol, 2004: 14)

[ii] Among all forms of political participation, voting in general elections is the place to start when investigating political inequality. First of all, elections are the most fundamental expression of political participation. Secondly, since this is the least costly form of engaging in politics, it is the hardest test for finding participatory inequality between social groups. Thirdly, voter turnout and the citizens' decisions whether or not to cast their votes has been studied extensively in political science and political sociology (Schneider & Makszin, 2014)

[iii]. Some scholars argue that low turnout rates are not viewed as a problem but as an indicator of citizens' basic satisfaction with the operation of the political system, which means that they can concentrate on their personal matters (Eckstein, 1966; Ranney, 1983; Sartori, 1962). It has even been hinted that too high an electoral turnout may be a symptom of extreme polarization capable of bringing about processes of political instability (Lipset, 1969).

[iv] For turnout studies, see Anduiza, 2002; Norris, 2004; Franklin, 2004; Solt, 2008; Soderlund et al., 2011; Quintelier et al., 2011. For other dependent variables, see Fisher et al., 2008; Anderson & Singer, 2008; Karp & Banducci, 2008; Kittilson & Schwindt-Bayer, 2010; Klingeman, 2009

[v] The behaviorist account also has been criticized as methodological victim-blaming by "searching for an explanation of nonparticipation in the nonparticipants."(Piven & Cloward, 1988: 121; Schattschneider, 1960: 105)

[vi] Pontusson (2013) points out that the attenuation of the egalitarian effect of unionization has to do with the position of union members in the income distribution. Who unions organize is the important question, but often missing in the PRT literature or this mobilization account of the participation of the poor.

[vii] As usual in election surveys, reported voter turnout is considerably higher. I use weighting procedures to correct for over-reporting. The weights are calculated as $W_{vj}=V_{oj}/V_{rj}$ for voters and $W_{nj}=1-V_{oj}/1-V_{rj}$ for nonvoters, where V_o is official turnout rate and V_r is reported turnout rate in country j. The official turnout data comes from the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance voter turnout database.

Chapter 3

Connecting Public Policy and Political Participation

Introduction

A commonly acknowledged fact is that subgroups of the population that are socially disadvantaged also suffer from political disadvantages in the form of lower political participation and representation (Barnes & Kasse, 1979; Verba et al., 1995; Beramendi & Anderson, 2008). The poor, low educated, unemployed tend to engage less in politics. In principle, the effect of an individual's level of income and her propensity to participate in politics should be constant across countries. In practice, however, we have evidence that this effect is not uniform. Instead, there is cross-country variation in the impact of income on participation. Consistent with the idea that there are macro-level factors that determine different patterns of participatory inequality, I argue that the cross-country differences in the turnout rates of low-income citizens are due to variance in the generosity of social policies in place. In other words, the patterns of participatory inequality are conditioned on contextual features such as a government's policy support for the social inclusion of the disadvantaged. Indeed, many studies report that inclusive social policies lay the foundation for more active democratic citizenship and greater political equality (Jacobs & Skocpol, 2007; Mettler, 2002; Putnam, 2001; Skocpol, 1992).

More specifically, I focus on differences in the public spending on labor market activation. Labor markets are the feature of capitalism to which individuals are most directly and most immediately exposed. This study argues that the type and degree of participatory distortions co-vary with public spending on active labor market policies. In the following section, the historical background and the concept of ALMPs are briefly reviewed. I subsequently discuss the effects of public policy for political participation, using the policy feedback framework.

Background: New Risks and Activation Turn

During the 1950s and 1960s-, the so-called "golden age of the welfare state," it was possible for governments to achieve full employment and political stability through Keynesian fiscal and monetary policies and compensatory welfare programs without undermining macroeconomic performance. However, as stagflation revealed in the 1970s, these approaches became ineffective for, and somehow detrimental to the national economy under liberalized capital flows and intensified trade competition in the globalized world. In addition, post-industrialization has reduced relatively well-paid manual jobs in industrial sectors and upgraded the skill levels necessary for adequately paid and secure jobs (Taylor-Gooby, 2004: 4-5). As a result, rather than merely safeguarding vulnerable workers with passive unemployment benefits and public assistance, most welfare states have been required to achieve a balance between protecting workers against economic fluctuations and reintegrating citizens into the labor

market: not just male breadwinners but also long-term unemployed youth, underprivileged minorities, and single parents. (Hausermann & Schwander, 2010)[i]. Consequently, the welfare needs of different parts of the workforce have become more diverse, ranging from employment protection to income replacement, active labor market policies, and childcare services (see e.g. Bonoli, 2005; Armingeon & Bonoli, 2006; Rueda, 2005; Kitschelt & Rehm, 2006; Cantillon, 2013).[ii] In response to new risk structures and new risk groups, some of the Western welfare states reinforce public investment in human capital formation through active measures (Garrett & Lange, 1991; Boix, 1998). Some provide positive and negative incentives for the jobless and inactive to engage in paid employment (Peck, 2001; Gilbert, 2002), and others build a dualized labor market though protecting regular contract workers' tenure and flexibilizing atypical employment (Palier & Thelen, 2010; Emmenegger et al., 2012).

The adoption of an active approach to social policy can be considered as a true paradigm shift in social policy-making.[iii] The post-war welfare state was above all about protecting income: to protect the incomes of the family father, or the male breadwinner. However, it did little to help people gain access to employment. The welfare state of the early twenty-first century, while it continues to perform its function for the preservation of the breadwinner, is pursuing another major objective as well: the promotion of labor market participation for all (Bonoli, 2013: 1)

As influential attempts at capturing this type of change in social policy, I briefly review the concept of social investment and active social policy. In particular, the notion of 'social investment' makes reference to policies that aim to help disadvantaged people by improving their life chances, particularly their chances to enter and succeed in education and in the labor market.[iv] Social investment emphasizes investment in human capital as a strategy to deal with social problems and to reduce inequalities. As a result, education and human capital is promoted throughout the life course. Social investment also refers to measures that remove obstacles to employment or to career advancement. These include the provision of subsidized childcare to parents of young children so that they can enter or remain in the labor market, but also active labor market policies that assist jobless people in their efforts to look for employment. As the use of the term 'investment' suggests, social policies do produce positive returns for society in terms of improved social cohesion. Investing in education, childcare, or an active labor market policy increases the productivity and earning capacity of individuals. Esping-Andersen insists on this quality of some of the new policies, arguing that spending on them should count as investment rather than as consumption (Esping-Andersen 2009: 96). Moreover, Vandenbrouche et al. (2011) call for a social investment pact for Europe, which should prioritize investment in policies that support children, lifelong learning, work and family reconciliation, and other areas. In addition, Hemerijck supports for "affordable social investment" or policies that can be developed despite the dire state of public finances (Hemerick, 2012).

As Bonoli (2013) suggests, it is helpful to think of social policies as a continuum, going from income and job protection, the traditional Keynesian, social democratic solution to social problem, to active policy and to recommodification, the standard neo-liberal response. Figure 3-I presents this view. Active social policies prioritize human capital investment and the removal of obstacles to labor market participation. Active social policies include labor market policies that aim to facilitate labor market entry and re-entry, policies that make it easier for parents to reconcile work and family life, and policies that invest in the human capital of disadvantaged people (Bonoli, 2013: 1). While the concept of social investment emphasizes human capital development and a notion of equality of opportunity that also entails some equality in the outcomes, little attention is paid to work incentives. In contrast, active social policy stresses much stronger work incentives (Bonoli, 2013: 17-19).

Figure 3-I. Social policy options arranged according to three principles: protection, active social policy, and commodification. Source: Bonoli (2013), Figure 2.1 (p.20).

Protection	Active Social Policy			(RE-) Commodification
Employment protection Early Retirement Cash benefits	Job creation schemes Social insertion programs Parental leave Anti-child poverty programs	Full vocational training Education Early childhood education	Job search programs Tax credits Childcare	Retrenchment Workfare Deregulation

With different emphases, these assessments of current developments in social policy show that something has changed in the way welfare states provide economic security. By activation measures, advanced industrial countries seek to promote economic and social security for labor market outsiders[v] against newly-emerging social risks such as irreconcilability between paid work, care obligations, and low skill attainment. Unlike a "passive" labor market policy, which replaces a worker's wage in the case of unemployment, activation is a policy strategy to improve human capital through extensive training schemes and job experiences (Rueda, 2014). To enhance individual citizens' employability without sacrificing equality, the role of activation measures are expanded to the public sector in human capital formation. Active labor market programs are thus an important policy instrument in integrating unemployed and under-employed individuals into the labor market and securing a decent living for them. Alternatively, other countries prioritize job protection for male industrial workers as breadwinners over other labor market programs. They also care less about empowerment-oriented social policies for atypical and precarious workers – i.e., those who are female and/or young. In other words, they put a lower priority on directly safeguarding them against various labor market risks (Hieda, 2015: 9). Consequently, in the countries that are most likely to expand active social policy, low-income and precarious citizens feel more secure and connected with a community, which can lead to political engagement. As Kumlin (2002: 40) aptly explains, "Experiences with empowering institutions yield more political trust than do experiences with less empowering institutions." In summary, an active social policy can be used to achieve greater equity by favoring more disadvantaged labor

market groups. As such, active social policies are considered a critical component of protection for the disadvantaged[vi].

The reorientation of Western welfare states towards active social policy takes place through different channels. Two important policy fields in which the active paradigm can be implemented: active labor market policy and childcare. In this chapter, I provide an overview of active labor market policies. The discussion of childcare will be presented more fully in Chapter 5.

Empowerment-oriented Active Labor Market Policies

Rather than simply providing a cash benefit to those who are unable to work, an active labor market policy aims to remove obstacles to employment, upskill workers, or provide access to work experience. ALMPs also differ from the neo-liberal approach to worklessness, which is based on strengthening incentives only through measures such as time limits on benefit recipiency, lower benefit rates, and sanctions. This study is in line with recent literature that has emphasized that there are different types of activation in labor market programs (Barbier, 2001; Bonoli, 2010, 2013; Vlandas, 2013) ALMP classifications tend to draw a line between good activation policies, which are about improving human capital, and the problematic ones, which use negative incentives to move people from social assistance into employment. For instance, Torfing (1999) distinguishes between "offensive" and "defensive" workfare. Offensive workfare, which

is the term used to describe the Danish variant of activation, relies on improving skills and empowering jobless people rather than on sanctions and benefit reduction, which is the defensive variant found in the United States. Taylor-Gooby (2004) makes the same point but instead uses the terms of "positive" activation and "negative" activation. Barbier (2004) distinguishes between "liberal activation" (characterized by stronger work incentives, benefit conditionality, and the use of sanctions) and "universalistic activation", which is found in the Nordic countries and relies on extensive investment in human capital essentially through training. Clegg (2005) identifies two policy mechanisms that can be subsumed under activation: circulation and integration. The idea behind circulation is to improve the chances of an unemployed person to enter into a contract with a potential employer (i.e., through placement services). Integration, on the other hand, refers to instruments that more directly bring the jobless into employment, such as benefit conditionality or sheltered employment.(Clegg 2005: 56).

Departing from the dichotomic and value-laden distinction that has dominated debates on ALMPs, Bonoli (2013) suggests a more complex view of what can be subsumed under the heading of active labor market policy. He makes reference to two dimensions. The first dimension concerns the extent to which the objective of policy is to put people back into unsubsidized market employment, provided by either private or public employers. These took the shape of temporary jobs created in the public or in the non-profit sector. The second dimension refers to the extent to which programs are based on investing in jobless people's human capital. Investment can take the shape of vocational training or help in developing the sort of soft skills employers look for when

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selecting candidates. Of the possible combinations between the two dimensions, the first type of ALMPs, "incentive reinforcement" refers to measure that intend to strengthen work incentives for benefit recipients. This objective can be achieved in various ways (i.e. by curtailing passive benefits, in terms of both benefit rates and duration). Benefits can also be made conditional upon participation in work schemes or other labor market programs. Incentives can be strengthened by providing work cash benefits to low-paid workers, such as tax credits, which are particularly strong in English-speaking countries. The second type, termed as "employment assistance", consists of interventions aimed at removing obstacles to labor market participation. These include placement services or job search programs that increase the likelihood of a jobless person establishing contact with a potential employer. Counseling and job subsidies may be useful to beneficiaries who have been out of the labor market for a long time or have never had a job and are often shunned by employers. For parents, an obstacle to employment may be the lack of childcare, and help in finding a suitable daycare service may also be included under the employment assistance variant. A third type of active labor market policy can be labeled as "occupation". Its objective is not primarily to promote labor market reentry, but rather to keep jobless people busy and to prevent the depletion of human capital associated with a period of unemployment. This type of ALMPs consists of job creation and work experience programs in the public or non-profit sector as well as training such as short courses. Finally, ALMPs can rely on upskilling or providing vocational training to jobless people. The idea here is to offer a second chance to people who were not able to profit from the training system or whose skills have become obsolete. A training program was the main reason for Swedish social democrats' promotion of ALMPs in the early 1950s.

The Rehn-Meidner model involved a solidaristic wage system that priced out low productivity industries. The resulting unemployed could then be re-trained and incorporated into high productivity industries (Huo, 2009). Thus, unlike other measures that incentivize unemployed people to take up jobs, training schemes aim to enable unemployed people to reskill thereby increasing their chances of successfully attaining their preferred employment position.

Among these subcategories, training, direct job creation, and employment incentives are nicely balanced between pro-market employment orientation and investment in human capital. As the measure of empowerment-oriented ALMPs, this study uses these three sub categories: public spending for training as a percentage of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and public spending for direct job creation as a percentage of the GDP, and public spending for employment assistance as a percentage of the GDP. More details on the levels and trend of ALMPs spending for each country can be found in Figures 3-II, 3-III, and 3-IV. (For specific values, see Tables 3-I, 3-II, and 3-III in the appendix).

Figure 3-II. Spending on direct job creation at a percentage of GDP in 27 OECD countries
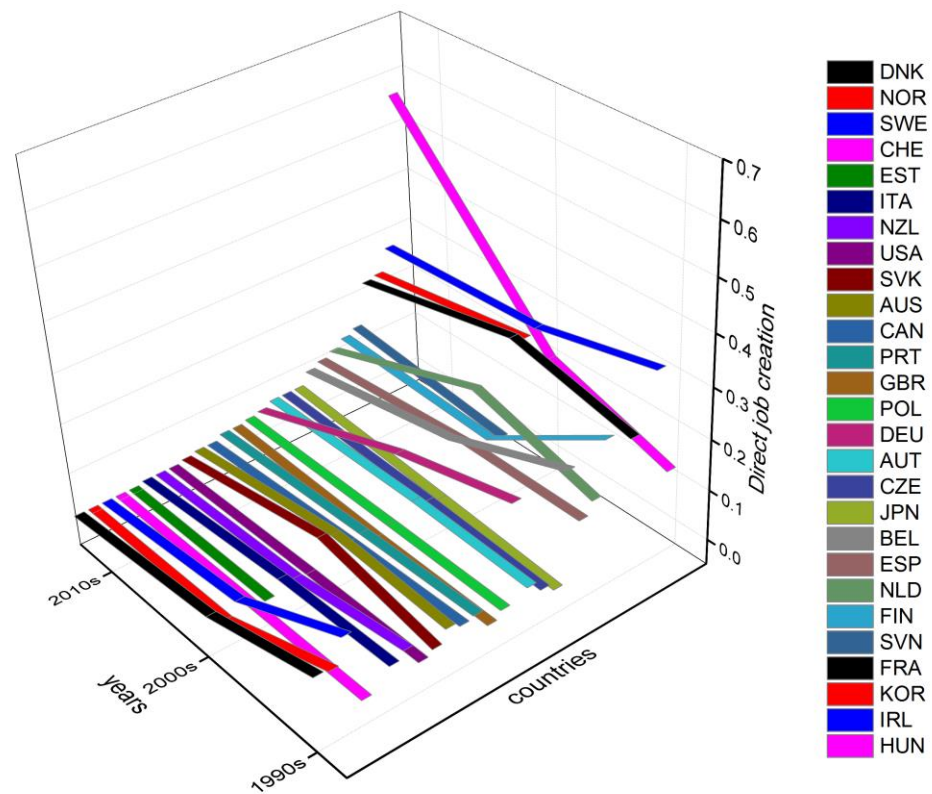
Figure 3-III. Spending on training measures as a percentage of GDP in 27 OECD countries
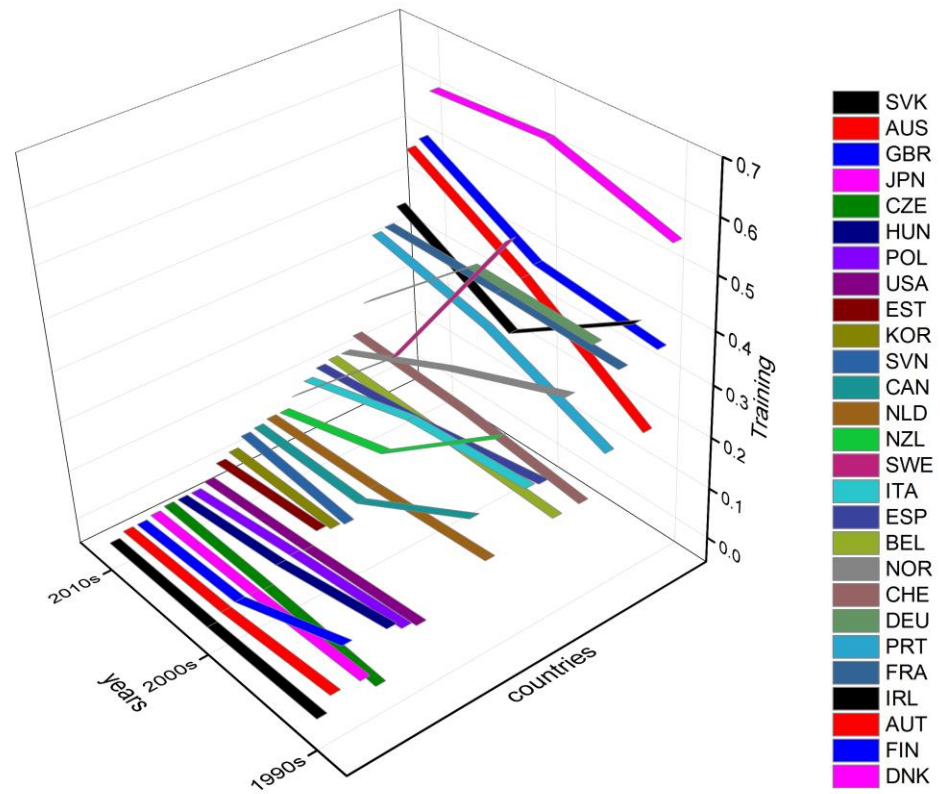
Figure 3-IV. Spending on employment incentives as a percentage of GDP in 27 OECD countries
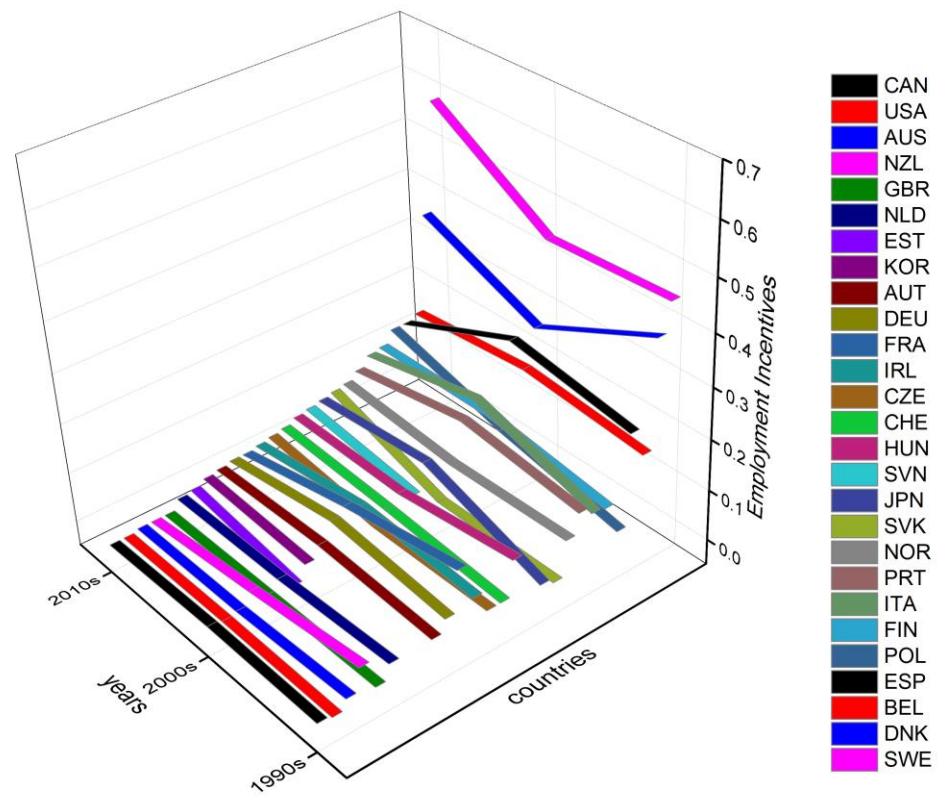
The Impact of Public Policy on Political Behavior

As discussed in Chapter 2, when explaining political participation, the literature refers to individual resources such as money and education as the main determinants of participation in politics (Armingeon, 2007; Verba et al., 1995; Norris, 2002; Dalton, 2004). By and large, the above-presented explanatory model does more or less a good job in explaining the differences among individuals in one context. However, it does not have much to say about variation in political participation over time, or across countries, nor can it explain why this explanatory model works better in one country than in another one. Over time, educational and economic standards have broadly risen, but turnout has not. Indeed, it has declined in many countries. Furthermore, the individual resources cannot account for differences among countries as there is a highly similar distribution of age and gender in all democratic countries. Social networks are also not sufficient to explain cross-national variation because they are nothing more than channels through which people are available and can be mobilized. The fact that people are available through them does not necessarily mean that these channels are employed permanently.

Based on a rational choice model, a number of authors have focused on how the institutional arrangements for different countries facilitate or inhibit participation. [vii] Simply stated, the argument is that different countries have different arrangements for the holding of elections and that these produce different incentive structures (Jackman, 1987; Jusko & Shively, 2005; Gallego, 2009). In general, nationally competitive electoral

district, a proportional voting system, a smaller number of parties, a unicameral system, and compulsory voting, all provide institutional incentives to vote. Although much of this research mark a significant contribution to the understanding of political participation, it is not entirely unproblematic. For instance, this body of literature begins to speak to why different countries may have different turnout levels at a given time, but cannot explain why turnout varies across time. This is because the explanatory variables used to account for turnout differentials are nearly all static measures. Therefore, this literature is entirely silent when it comes to answering the question as to why the relative performance in turnout alters over time. While it may competently offer a guide for some of the factors and explain why different countries have varying levels of electoral turnout, it insufficiently addresses why turnout should change over time and why certain countries experience falls in turnout while others do not.

First, I do not deny the significant role of these factors, but at the same time, it is clear that those factors alone cannot account for political participation as a whole. As Franklin (2004) argues, voting is both an individual decision and a product of the context in which individuals make political decisions. Circumstances have an undeniable influence on political participation, and therefore a contextual perspective has to be introduced to the political participation research. Notably, the effects of micro and macro features are not additive. Rather, individual and contextual characteristics interact to affect the decision to participate in politics. The exact same individual characteristic, such as income, can hinder or promote participation in some environments, but it may be irrelevant or even have the contrary effect in others. Institutional and contextual

explanations intensely modify the costs of voting in a cross-national perspective. In this sense, my argument joins a growing stream of research on comparative political behavior that claims that we need to jointly assess micro and macro determinants of political participation.

Second, moving beyond the 'input'-side variables of the political process, we need to direct our attention to the 'supply'-side arguments on why the poor do not join the game of democratic politics (Sundstrom & Stockemer, 2013; Offe 2014). If one seeks to understand social action and its cognitive foundation, the supply-side arguments start with people' lived experience of governments and political parties as the suppliers of public policies and seek to understand participatory distortion through policy outcomes. People are likely to refrain from participating in politics if they perceive the governments and political parties as lacking both the necessary means and the credible intent to make a difference in matters, which form the core concerns of those who do not participate. People fail to participate because they have come to perfectly well understand that lack. They do not join the game of democratic politics because they are unconvinced that doing so would yield results that are worth their effort, nor do they trust that making such efforts could succeed in changing the agenda and priorities ruling the overall political economy (Offe, 2014: 9-10).

This reasoning resonates with the "relative power theory" in the studies of economic inequality and turnout. According to this theory, the degree of socioeconomic

inequality that prevails in a society is itself to be taken as an artifact of policy - i.e., an outcome of the presence or absence of fiscal, labor market, income, educational and many other policies that favor egalitarian outcomes in terms of overall life chances. Under this perceived configuration of economic and political forces, it simply makes no sense for the poor to participate. Fatalism prevails among them because they are likely to rationally conclude that that is futile to be engaged in politics. Given their accumulated experience of living in a highly and increasingly unequal society in which the government is evidently not in control of the resources needed for redistributive measures, people lack what used to be termed a "sense of subjective political efficacy" (Offe, 2014: 14)

From the perspective of an "interpretive political economy" (Offe, 2014), we need to consider the role public policy plays in shaping political participation. Public policies are an overlooked area where citizens can learn the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and develop the skills and motivations to sustain a liberal political culture (Wichowsky & Moynihan, 2008). In order to specify how the contextual determinant modifies the relationship between income and voting and how experiences with public policies affect levels of civic and political engagement among the poor, this study draws on policy feedback literature, which assumes that "policies help make citizens" (Campbell, 2003).

How Policies Can Foster a More Inclusive and Engaged Citizenry

The growing research on policy feedback captures the relationship between policy and mass opinion/action by seeking to clarify how policies are likely to affect political thought and action in the citizenry[viii] (Bendz, 2012). Policy feedback theory stresses that mass opinion and behavior are not solely functions of individual characteristics and preferences but are also the result of interactions between institutions and citizens (Mettler & Soss, 2004). Policies can indirectly affect civic attitudes and behaviors by creating incentives for enhanced political participation. Policies can also influence citizenship by creating opportunities for citizens to learn civic skills and enhance their sense of obligation to the policies. Moreover, policies communicate to citizens about their civic identity and degree of membership within the political community (Schneider & Ingram, 1997), conveying messages as to whether their voices matter and "whether government is responsive to their concerns, thereby encouraging engagement, passivity, or even alienation." (Wichowsky & Moynihan, 2008: 909; Mettler, 2002; Soss, 1999, 2005) Policies also promote the political incorporation of social groups (Marshall, 1965). Policies such as social security give "standing" to individuals, offering dignity and respect to beneficiaries and recognizing them as full members of the citizenry. Policies can shape such psychological attachments to the political process due to individuals' belief that they were treated fairly in governmental programs. Collectively policy feedback studies suggest political behavior and citizenship variables not only function as exogenous democratic input but are also reshaped by public policies. A critical insight from policy feedback research is that public policy contributes to the vitality and function

of democracy by affecting how people think and act as members of a community. Thus, the policy serves as an output of political decisions and also as an input that creates frames and structures that affect costs and benefits associated with future political decisions as well as peoples' incentives and perceptions which in turn influence political action (Pierson, 1993).

Within this body of research, a number of studies suggest that welfare policies can deepen or ameliorate the political marginality of disadvantaged groups, depending on how they are structured (Mettler & Soss, 2004; Bruch et al., 2009). Welfare programs distribute resources that can facilitate political action (Verba et al., 1995). They create incentives to participate by giving recipients a self-interest stake in defending program benefits (Campbell, 2003). Additionally, they provide direct experiences of government that can teach vital lessons about power, identity, and the desirability of exercising a political voice (Mettler, 2005; Soss, 2000). For instance, Campbell (2003) finds that participation in Social Security Old Age Insurance has a positive effect on political participation among senior citizens, with the largest boost occurring among low-income recipients. In interpreting these results, Campbell emphasizes how low-income beneficiaries receive resources that facilitate the involvement, are mobilized by program-related interest groups, and have especially strong incentives to mobilize in defense of benefits (see e.g. Chen, 2013).

The causal mechanisms emphasized in these studies focus on *resource* effects. Low-income groups tend to lack the resources needed for political participation, such as money, skills and time, as well as connections to organizations that recruit people into politics (Verba et al., 1995). From this perspective, social policies should mitigate the political disadvantages of the poor most effectively when they offer higher benefits and give rise to organizations that offset the costs of participation.

Alongside resources, feedback studies place equal emphasis on the cognitive (or "interpretive") effects of policy-based experiences (Pierson, 1993). Pierson suggests that policy feedback is able to operate on the cognitive level, and particularly on information and understandings of the social world among mass publics. Policies can act as shortcuts for individuals, providing information with which to construct narratives, which in turn help them to understand the social world (Pierson, 1993: 619-621). As Soss (1999) points out, for many people, welfare experiences serve as their most direct source of information about how government works. Thus, welfare program users use their experiences to draw inferences about the government in general, such as the government's responsiveness or the program users' own ability to participate in political life. The conclusion is that welfare programs are sites of political learning. This kind of policy should produce feedback effects in accordance with the cues it conveys to broader mass audiences either through the policy's direct impact on peoples' lives or from its symbolic meanings (Soss & Schram, 2007). In this instance, policies and institutions have an enormous influence on politics by shaping individuals' perceptions of the social world. Gingrich (2014: 578) aptly pinpoints that social policies are simultaneously distributing resources and

information; both affect the ways that individuals experience economic insecurity and their knowledge about the role of the state in this process. From this perspective, policy designs do more than just distribute resources; they convey potent messages about political identities, possibilities, and realities (Schneider & Ingram, 1997). Personal experiences with public policy have the power to teach lessons about group status, government responsiveness, and the efficacy and wisdom of exercising one's voice as a citizen (Soss, 2004).

In addition, socio-political institutions can potentially establish and sustain *norms* that buttress democratic participation (Van Oorshot & Finsveen, 2000). Following Rothstein (1998), Lister (2007) argues that universalist welfare institutions create and sustain solidarity by reducing inequality between citizens, and by being just forms of organization. Such solidarity forms a social foundation for democratic participation. For Baldwin (1990), a universal social policy, which seeks to include all, or at least a vast majority of the population, is solidaristic. It does not necessarily redistribute resources; rather, it redistributes risk. As a result, in a universal system, the exposure to the risk of societal distress and dislocation is equalized. In so doing, solidarity is created, so that a sense of togetherness and social cohesion is both felt and institutionalized (Lister, 2007: 23-24). In effect, what these arguments suggest regarding the present analysis is that welfare state policies influence electoral turnout because, through multiple mechanisms, they play a fundamental role in engendering social norms of solidarity. A norm of solidarity matters for electoral turnout because it both encourages participation directly, by suggesting to individuals that such activity is right or expected, and indirectly, because

it simultaneously provides individuals with the information that others are likely to participation. This suggests that welfare state institutions do have effects on political behavior. Welfare public institutions that provide more expansive social citizenship rights produce positive 'lessons' about the government and other citizens. Overall, low-status people lack the resources, cognitive skills, motivations and other personal features that are conducive to participation. These deficiencies can be overcome through public policies that provide countervailing incentives – material, cognitive, and normative ones.

Group-specific Effect of Public Policy on Political Participation

The studies on policy feedback rely on Esping-Andersen's (1990) "welfare regime approaches," which assume a uniform policy impact. However, policies are typically targeted at particular population groups or affect individuals differently. Therefore, to evaluate the societal impact of public policies, it is crucial to know how specific groups of individuals react to particular policy contexts. It is thus more promising to conceptualize feedback in terms of differences across policies and individuals within countries.

I highlight the role that social protection policies play in moderating the inequality in participation and fostering political participation. In so doing, it follows an important strand of research on the relationship between the welfare state and civic activities (Curtis et al., 2001; Dahlberg, 2005, Van Oorschot & Arts, 2005). In previous studies, by

focusing on the question of whether generous welfare states lead to more or less civic engagement, they pay more attention to the *level* of civic engagement, rather than its *distribution* (Stadelmann-Steffen, 2011: 140). Following Larsen (2007), welfare regimes generate very dissimilar living conditions, mainly at the bottom of society. Two social groups are therefore distinguished: citizens with low levels of income and those with relatively high levels. By asking whether state activities can influence civic engagement and act as a corrective to skewed civic participation, this study assesses the role of the state in enhancing or driving out citizens' participation. It also focuses on the problem of socially unequal civic engagement from both a supply and a demand perspective. I concentrate on public policies that might have a more direct influence on the material conditions for the involvement of those with low SES (Socioeconomic status). As the welfare state does not affect the entire population in the same way, it is reasonable to believe that the effect state policy has on political engagement is also not uniform. Rather its effect varies depending on individual resources, values, and behavior patterns. While the wealthiest citizens contribute more to the welfare state (largely through taxation), the least advantaged citizens stand to benefit the most from it. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that the welfare state context influences various social groups differently with regard to their propensity to vote. It also affects the social stratification of political engagement (Shore, 2014; Stadelmann-Steffen, 2011). Group-specific social policy effects will be hypothesized and modeled in the following chapter.

Summary

This chapter has addressed whether the policy outcomes themselves affect participation and the way people think about politics. Policies can have both negative and positive effects on participation. First, they are able to distribute (and redistribute) the resources needed for political mobilization that might otherwise be lacking. Second, policies can motivate people to become interested in politics due to the personal stakes that policies have on people's lives. If a policy targets a program that directly affects the individual, she may be more likely to get involved politically due to personal stakes. For example, one can consider the high voter turnout rates and policy-based activism of low-income pensioners in the United States – i.e., those most likely to receive social security benefits (Campbell, 2003).

In addition, policies can play a significant role in developing and distributing political and civic skills within constituencies (Mettler, 2002). As Mettler and Soss (2004: 62) aptly note, "Depending on their design features, public policies of many types may help citizens learn how to deal effectively with government and allow them to experience the art of collective policy decisions." Policies can also have cognitive effects on citizens (Pierson, 1993). For instance, policies may signal to the citizenry that they have rights to certain benefits, goods, or services (Mettler & Soss, 2004). The messages policies send to people can relay information about where they stand in their community (Schneider & Ingram, 1997) or "whether the government is responsive to their concerns,

thereby encouraging engagement, passivity, or even alienation." (Wichowsky & Moynihan, 2008: 909; Mettler, 2002; Soss, 1999) As such, the ways that policies are designed influence people's personal and everyday experiences with their governments (Kumlin, 2002; Kumlin & Rothstein, 2005).

The effects policies have on their citizens "feed back into the political system. Citizens' relationships with government, and their experiences at the hand of government policy, help determine their participation levels and in turn, subsequent policy outcomes." (Campbell, 2003: 2) To sum up, policies themselves can play a role in shaping the level and distribution of democratic engagement. Mass attitudes and behavior are not just functions of individual characteristics and preferences but are also the result of interactions between policy context and citizens (Mettler & Soss, 2004). Since the distribution of societal goods constitutes a basic function of democratic governments, who gets what, how much and how, as determined by the design of policies, can weigh heavily on citizens' capabilities and motivations for political participation. Generous welfare structures and policies are thought to have an integrative effect, promoting the political incorporation of all social groups (Alber & Kohler, 2008). Therefore, it can be assumed that social protection measures firmly committed to the reduction of economic inequality across socio-economic groups are also capable of promoting higher and more equitable levels of political participation because they enhance efficacy and saliency through social integration. External efficacy is nurtured by generous welfare policies embodying norms of fairness and universality, which can convey the message that the

government is attentive and responsive to the needs of the many and not just the better-off.

In consideration of how policies affect participation in general as well as, how they foster participatory equality, we can also conceive of group-specific effects. For people whose socio-economic resources would predict an already high propensity to participate, the effect of additional social spending on their political behavior would be smaller than the effect for lower income groups. While it is expected that generous welfare states will have an overall positive direct effect on political participation, conditional hypotheses regarding indirect effects can also be tested. In contexts where social policies are aimed attacking inequality, we can expect a weaker link between resources and participation propensity. In other words, welfare policies moderate this relationship and provide the greatest boost in participation to citizens with the fewest resources, as government offerings may have a more significant impact on their well-being than those from the upper-income categories. Poorer individuals may also stand to benefit the most from the integrative effects of welfare policies which convey to them that they too are valued and represented members of the policy. Such messages may be pivotal in mobilizing the vote and getting under-represented groups to feel their voices can be heard (Shore, 2014: 45-46).

In Chapter 6, causal mechanisms are specified, in which external political efficacy/satisfaction with democracy/political identity has a mediating effect on the

posited relationship. In particular, spending on empowerment-oriented labor market policies makes citizens feel more integrated to the system, which in turn increases the propensity to engage in politics. While existing empirical studies point to the conditioning role of context-level variables, few arguments are put forward for why this is the case.

Appendix

Table 3-I. Country-specific average spending on *training programs*

Country	1990s	2000s	2010s
AUS	0.04	0.02	0.015
AUT	0.21	0.37	0.5
BEL	0.14	0.15	0.16
CAN	0.225	0.093	0.094
CZE	0.008	0.02	0.025
DNK	0.535	0.605	0.59
FIN	0.355	0.385	0.51
FRA	0.355	0.365	0.37
DEU	0.425	0.435	0.24
HUN	0.105	0.055	0.025
IRL	0.425	0.275	0.4
ITA	0.225	0.205	0.14
JPN	0.035	0.025	0.02
KOR		0.07	0.07
NLD	0.13	0.11	0.1
NZL	0.345	0.165	0.1
NOR	0.355	0.265	0.16
POL	0.09	0.06	0.025
PRT	0.21	0.31	0.365
SVK	0.01	0.005	0.005
ESP	0.22	0.18	0.155
SWE	0.67	0.335	0.12
CHE	0.14	0.17	0.185
GBR	0.12	0.025	0.015
USA	0.08	0.055	0.035
EST		0.08	0.06
SVN		0.065	0.09

Table 3-II. Country-specific average spending on *direct job creation*

Country	1990s	2000s	2010s
AUS	0.045	0.06	0.015
AUT	0.035	0.045	0.045
BEL	0.22	0.13	0.07
CAN	0.035	0.03	0.015
CHE	0	0	0
CZE	0.015	0.03	0.045
DEU	0.215	0.155	0.035
DNK	0.095	0.03	0
ESP	0.11	0.11	0.08
EST		0	0
FIN	0.24	0.09	0.105
FRA	0.215	0.27	0.2
GBR	0.005	0.01	0.025
HUN	0.11	0.19	0.545
IRL	0.32	0.265	0.25
ITA	0.035	0.03	0.005
JPN	0	0.02	0.045
KOR		0.255	0.205
NLD	0.135	0.205	0.09
NOR	0.09	0.005	0
NZL	0.05	0.015	0.005
POL	0.02	0.025	0.03
PRT	0.04	0.035	0.025
SVK	0.02	0.07	0.01
SVN		0.08	0.115
SWE	0.14	0.03	0
USA	0.01	0.01	0.005

Table 3-III. Country-specific average spending on *employment incentives*

Country	1990s	2000s	2010s
AUS	0.02	0.01	0.01
AUT	0.04	0.055	0.05
BEL	0.17	0.195	0.175
CAN	0.005	0.01	0.005
CHE	0.035	0.055	0.07
CZE	0.035	0.035	0.065
DEU	0.065	0.09	0.055
DNK	0.38	0.265	0.365
ESP	0.225	0.265	0.165
EST		0	0.035
FIN	0.105	0.14	0.14
FRA	0.145	0.105	0.055
GBR	0.01	0.01	0.01
HUN	0.105	0.075	0.08
IRL	0.075	0.09	0.06
ITA	0.11	0.185	0.135
JPN	0.025	0.11	0.09
KOR		0.03	0.045
NLD	0.04	0.03	0.03
NOR	0.085	0.08	0.1
NZL	0.065	0.035	0.01
POL	0.045	0.095	0.165
PRT	0.125	0.155	0.115
SVK	0.015	0.015	0.095
SVN		0.055	0.085
SWE	0.435	0.425	0.575
USA	0	0.005	0.005

[i] More specifically, Hausermann and Schwander highlight three types of insider-outsider divides, which are 1) labor market divides(earning vs training), 2) social protection divides (welfare coverage and benefits), 3) political integration divides (underrepresentation and alienation). They show descriptively that outsider status in the labor market is associated with weak political integration in the form of voting abstention.

[ii] For instance, young unemployed labor market entrants need jobs, rather than income protection. Part-time employed workers contribute only insufficiently to social insurance schemes. Hence, they need redistribution, rather than income insurance. Working parents need policies that enable them to stay in the labor market, and elderly unemployed workers with obsolete skills need retraining.

[iii] Reflecting these newly-emerging welfare needs, scholars have made reference to a fundamental shift in welfare state development., taking place between the late 1990s, and the early 2000s: The Third way (Powell, 1999; White, 2001), Flexicurity, New social risks (Taylor-Gooby, 2004; Bonoli, 2005; Armingeon & Bonoli, 2006), and Social investment turn (Hemerijck, 2011; Jenson 2011).

[iv] Similarly, Streeck and Mertens (2011) label this reorientation of the welfare states as 'soft investment', which is a specific sort of public spending aimed at creating conditions required for the prosperity and sustainability of 'post-industrial' or 'knowledge society'. Four categories of public expenditure are considered soft investment: spending on (1) education, (2) research and development, (3) active labor market policy and (4) families. Expenditure on education and research & development supports the human capital formation and industrial innovation, which enhance economic prosperity and social equity in the long term. Active labor market policy aims to improve the "employability" of people at risk of becoming long-term unemployed, mostly by training but also by other measures that promote their social and economic inclusion. Family policies, finally, are intended to enable women to have children while being gainfully employed and also to improve the opportunities for children from less well-to-do families.

[v] In line with the literature on dualization (Rueda, 2005, 2006; Emmenegger, 2009), labor market outsiders are considered those individuals who are particularly exposed and vulnerable to the risk of being unemployed or atypically employed. As specific risks of economic precariousness, long-term and youth unemployment involves a risk of poverty, not only because of immediate income loss but also because repeatedly unemployed people have lower social insurance contribution records. Atypical employment (i.e. all employment relations that deviate from the standard industrial model of full-time, stable and insured employment) is also a source of economic precariousness.

[vi] Disadvantage comprises concepts such as employment precariousness, outsiderness, insecurity, in-work poverty and so on. It covers situations such as having no or only insecure employment, being underemployed due to involuntary part-time or earning a low wage. They trigger worries about future material and social deprivation and hence function as powerful stressors. This has been shown for job insecurity, unemployment, and precarious employment (Emmenegger et al., 2015)

[vii] For a review on research on how institutional factors foster voter turnout, see Blais (2006)

[viii] In the last decade, comparative policy research has examined different types of feedback hypotheses in empirical studies on political participation (e.g. Soss, 1999; Mettler, 2002; Campbell, 2005; Soss & Schram, 2007), political trust (Anderson & Singer, 2005; Newton, 2006; Kumlin, 2004, 2007), social policy attitudes (e.g. Jaeger, 2006; Larsen, 2007; Svallfors, 2010), social capital (e.g. Kumlin & Rothstein, 2005), civil society participation (Stadelmann-Steffen, 2011), and social contacts (Anderson, 2009).

Chapter 4

Cross-national Analysis of Turnout Inequality

Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

The individual sources of turnout inequality have been well studied and need not be tested again. What is more interesting is that the degree of turnout inequality seems to be different across countries. It is reasonable to expect that there may be macro factors that affect the income gaps in voter turnout. As discussed at length in Chapter 3, differences in social policy expenditure are an obvious candidate to examine. To what extent are patterns of electoral participation related to different state provisions? Does the redistributive approach of state policies have a significant impact on society's socio-political stratification and levels of political engagement? In this study, I argue that public expenditure on 'empowerment-oriented' ALMPs reduces participatory inequalities in ways to redistribute individual level resources and foster a feeling of empowerment, especially for the lower-status group.

As resource theory indicates, social protection measures redistribute individual level resources from the haves to the have-nots by providing social benefits and specific subsidies for the poor and the unemployed. Resource redistribution removes part of the restrictions in becoming involved for the less privileged and hence reduces turnout inequality. When the opportunities are offered to everyone, the underprivileged gain more than those who were already in a position where they did not need support. Hence, turnout inequality between those with individual resources and those without them can be reduced. Furthermore, as policy feedback literature highlights, outsider-friendly[i] social policies will generate a motivation for political civic engagement to protect welfare provision and will foster a norm of solidarity and empowerment among the disadvantaged. In short, I expect that the social policy context has a tempering effect on the turnout gap between the rich and the poor.

H1: The effect of income on electoral participation is smaller in countries that spend a large share of their gross domestic product on empowerment-oriented ALMPs than in countries with limited expenditure on ALMPs.

This section formulates two rival predictions about how the welfare context might affect the turnout gap between the rich and the poor. Welfare context is a vague concept and challenging to validate empirically since there are so many dimensions to it. Broadly, a welfare state system can be understood as a state intervention and as a set of policies

that provides socio-economic equality and security by means of economic redistribution through taxation, unemployment benefits, education, public health care services, and other areas. (Schubert et al., 2009). The key question concerns how and why the welfare state context has a contingent effect by influencing the strength of the relationship between income and turnout. A contingent effect refers to a situation when a contextual variable influences the relation between two variables at the individual level (see Anderson, 2007: 595-596).

Previous research on the connection between (in)egalitarian-context and political participation offers mixed results. One can distinguish between two clear and contradictory directions, which can be described as the question of engagement or disengagement, according to the type of motivation. In general, there are two competing views on the expected relationship and findings. One view is represented by the positive externalities of public policy and relative power theory pursuing the argument of egalitarian policy context as a mobilizing factor. The argument is straightforward: the egalitarian context is believed to create citizens' willingness to engage in the political process. Another view held by conflict theory claims a negative relationship between the egalitarian-context and political participation in that citizens are satisfied with current extensive welfare provisions.

Engagement by Empowerment

The empowerment hypothesis predicts that economic equality and welfare services reduce the turnout gap between the rich and the poor. Assumingly, resources such as time, money, and skills are more evenly distributed between advantaged and disadvantaged groups in more comprehensive welfare states. At the individual level, the ability to vote relates to an individual's personal resources such as time, money, information and cognitive skills. Ability is traditionally linked to demographic factors such as age, education, and income and is in line with the civic voluntarism model, which emphasizes personal resources, psychological engagement, and access to recruitment networks (Verba et al., 1995).

Extensive welfare states are conducive to widespread personal resources and abilities. Welfare state provisions create material equality by means of redistribution and the equality of opportunities. Social spending provides universal access to collective goods such as higher education, healthcare, and social security benefits, which moderate social inequalities. Extensive welfare state services provide these individuals with necessary resources to volunteer to engage, and they can also bolster the political awareness of these groups and thus encourage political participation. Furthermore, universal welfare states in particular decrease the perceived cultural distance between the majority and the bottom (Larsen, 2007), thereby fostering the willingness to serve others. Along these lines, an extensive welfare state generates the structural and cultural

conditions for a flourishing civil society (Van Oorschot & Arts, 2005:6). Less affluent citizens, who are likely to benefit the most from social spending as the primary recipients of social services, exhibit a low level of voluntary engagement. An extensive welfare state provides these individuals with basic financial resources, security, and possibly some of the free time needed for voluntary engagement (Van Oorschot & Arts, 2005:6). Moreover, extensive welfare states reduce the consciousness of belonging to disadvantaged social groups (Larsen, 2007), which bolsters the probability of volunteering.[ii]

Indeed, inequality in the form of income and risks tends to be detrimental to social cohesion and political participation. Welfare benefits alleviate the situation for disadvantaged citizens in active welfare states and established democracies so that these citizens "do not have to struggle for their existence, and this enables various kinds of social communication, participation, and trust to flourish." (Wallace & Pichler, 2007: 50) Turnout should, therefore, be higher for people with low income in egalitarian welfare states as the resource differentials are generally smaller between the advantaged and disadvantaged. As the opportunities for participation in elections are equalized in strong welfare states, the turnout gap between the rich and the poor becomes narrower.

Another convincing psychological interpretation is represented by the relative power theory which suggests that the context of economic inequality impacts the shape of politics, whereby those with few resources participate less since they feel their chances of

influencing political outcomes are limited (Goodin & Dryzek, 1980; Solt, 2008). From the perspective of a disadvantaged voter, this means that political parties are too similar to each other and too far away from her preferred policy. According to Goodin and Dryzek (1980), the low participation of the poor is grounded in their own experiences and perceptions about the functioning of the political process. Moreover, the poor will learn it is highly difficult to get their preferences represented in politics, so they will abandon preferences that they already know will not prevail (Lukes, 2005). Confronted with these experiences, poor citizens, acting rationally, will renounce to use political means as the best way to pursue their own interests. They will lose interest in politics and refrain from participating. Rather than lacking the intellectual skills and energies to engage in democratic politics, large parts of the population have come to understand quite well that they live in a kind of one-vote one-dollar democracy. Conversely, if the government devotes a considerable amount of commitment to social policies for those marginal to the labor market, relative power theory predicts that low-income individuals will experience a reduced sense of social exclusion. Additionally, their self-efficacy and positive perceptions of the political system will improve. This, in turn, should enhance political engagement.

The empowerment hypothesis thus predicts a heterogeneous effect of the generous social spending on labor market programs. Increasing social and economic equality reduces the turnout gap by fostering the turnout of poor citizens, while not affecting rich citizens' turnout to a great extent. Thus, the hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H2-I: The size of the gap in the turnout rates of the poor and the rich *decreases* with greater state investment in labor market activation.

Engagement by Discontent

Second, the discontent hypothesis states that the inegalitarian policy context reduces the turnout gap between the rich and the poor. In that case, low-income citizens are, relative to those with high income, less motivated and mobilized in developed welfare states than in less developed ones. Generally, the motivation to vote can arise from a person having strong preferences for political alternatives and the wish to influence the outcomes of the election. There are, of course, a host of other motivational factors such as a personal sense of duty, peer pressure, and psychological and social rewards (Harder and Krosnick, 2008). At the individual level, even though poor resources act as a barrier to voting, disadvantaged citizens can be more motivated to vote if they are dissatisfied rather than satisfied with current governmental policies. Thus, the turnout gap between the rich and the poor would narrow with increasing dissatisfaction.

Demand for social protection can provide an incentive for participation for disadvantaged groups. Poor citizens are, in that case, mobilized to vote based on their

dissatisfaction with the current situation even though they have fewer personal resources.[iii] Low levels of social and economic equality may provide a high motivation for action by voting for politicians and parties that are supportive of greater economic redistribution and social spending.[iv] On the contrary, the likelihood of the mobilization of poor citizens is lower in countries where the situation is relatively acceptable given the ingrained social welfare and widely redistributed resources. Disadvantaged people are inactive as voters because they are satisfied with how the welfare state performs. As such, no particular struggle is needed to receive vital outputs from the political system.

This line of reasoning aligns with conflict theory in economic inequality research.[v] Some scholars assume that economic inequality fosters participation by increasing conflicts among the rich and the poor. Both groups will turn out to vote to influence the course of politics. The less economically privileged demand shared wealth and vote for parties that are likely to pursue redistributive policies (Meltzer & Richard, 1981; Brady, 2004). The relatively rich may also be mobilized to consolidate their gains and vote for anti-tax parties, but, overall, the turnout gap should be reduced. Conversely, inequality reduction will produce consensus over the policy preferences, since more equal individuals will have more equal preferences (Brady, 2004). Conflict theories assume that all individuals have the same political skills and what differentiates one individual from one another is one's personal interest, and individual interest depends on one's position on the income ladder (Jaime-Castillo, 2009). From this theoretical prediction, the following hypothesis on group-specific effect can be derived:

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H2-II: The size of the gap in the turnout rates of the poor and the rich *increases* with greater state investment in labor market activation.

Table 4-I presents the contrasting theoretical predictions of the political participation of the poor under the different policy contexts.

Table 4-I. Theoretical predictions regarding the motivational factors leading to (non-) participation of the lower-status group in the context of labor market policies.

	Participation of the lower-status group	**Non-participation of the lower-status group**
High state investment on labor market activation	Empowerment	Satisfaction
Low state investment on labor market activation	Discontent	Resignation

Data

The analysis is based on the cross-national survey samples of individuals undertaken in the Comparative Studies of Electoral Systems (CSES). The CSES is in many respects an ideal data set that covers many countries over time and includes variables for self-reported turnout, income status, other sociodemographic characteristics, and political attitudes. Survey data taken in 4 waves between 1996 and 2015 across 27 OECD countries are analyzed. Not only in terms of data availability but also theoretically, the use of a broader country sample including developing countries implies more complex processes that are not at the center of this study and are therefore excluded. This individual-level data are merged with macro-level data measuring public spending on the ALMPs and other country characteristics. In order to deal with missing values, a list-wise deletion of missing values was applied to the data. Table 4-I in the Appendix provides an overview of the variables used.

Measurement

The key variables of this study are individual turnout, income, and an objective measure of public expenditure on the ALMPs. The measures for turnout and income status are straightforward in the sense that they are based on responses provided by the individuals themselves. The dependent variable of *turnout* is a binary indicator of self-

reported turnout in the last national election. The survey question capturing electoral participation was as follows: *"Did respondent cast a ballot?"* Respondents who answered "yes" were coded as 1 and those who answered "no" were coded as 0. Respondents below the voting age (18) and above 100 were excluded. The average reported voter turnout rate across all countries is 84 %, ranging from 72% in Poland to 98% in Australia. However, it should be emphasized that these figures represent self-reported electoral participation and thus do not perfectly correspond to official turnout rates. As with all subjective measures of electoral participation, turnout levels are considerably over-reported as a result of memory flaws or social desirability bias (Blais, 2000; Dahlberg & Persson, 2013; Holbrook & Krosnick 2010; Karp & Brockington 2005). The social desirability bias of respondents refers to phenomena where respondents, due to social norms, feel obliged to provide the socially desirable answer – i.e., that they voted when they, in fact, did not (Karp & Brockington 2005). This over-reporting of voting inevitably creates less variation in the dependent variable. Nevertheless, I proceeded with this variable, since official turnout does not include any information about who exactly participates in the elections. Furthermore, over-reporting in this survey is unlikely to be larger or smaller than in other surveys.

In the CSES database, *income*, the key individual-level variable, is measured in relative terms. That is, each individual was assigned to one income quintile according to the household net income. Dummy variables have been defined to measure relative income on a five-point scale. The first income quintile is taken as the reference category. The primary independent variable at the country level was measured according to a

country's levels of *public spending on empowerment-oriented ALMPs*, such as *training, direct job creation, and employment incentives*, from the year the survey was conducted[vi]. By using these elements of public spending on labor markets, I follow Castles (2008: 60) who has recently shown that a disaggregated expenditures approach is useful for establishing "not only the variety of what welfare states do but also the determinants and the outcomes of such interventions." These types of spending are more directly related to the socioeconomic integration of labor market outsiders and the disadvantaged. This country-level measure is interacted with income to determine if the turnout gap narrows or widens between citizens with low and high income as public investment in the active labor market policies increases. The interaction variables are computed by multiplying the four income dummies by the spending indicators.

A variety of individual and institutional factors may facilitate or discourage political participation. For the individual level, a group of sociodemographic variables in the resource model was included as control variables: *age* (only individuals 18 and older, and removed outliers on age, i.e., those who reported to be older than 100 years), *age-squared, gender,* and *education*. The impact of age is tested using continuous variables age for a linear relationship and age-squared to capture a curvilinear relationship. Gender is a dummy variable with "female" as the reference category. Education has five values: 1 = primary or less, 2 = incomplete secondary, 3 = complete secondary, 4 = post-secondary vocational school or university without degree, and 5 = university degree. These variables present commonly used explanations of why political participation varies

among individuals (Brady et al., 1995). For detailed information on coding procedures, see Table 4-V in the Appendix.

In order to account for differences between countries, I also controlled for additional country-level factors. The tendency for *compulsory voting* to enhance participation is among the most robust findings in electoral studies (Geys, 2006; Blais & Dobrzynska, 1998; Hadjar & Beck, 2010). This mandatory character of voting does not add to the legitimacy of a political system, but it does mobilize a part of the electorate that would otherwise have stayed at home. According to Lijphart (1997), differences in participation among various socio-economic groups are much less evident in countries where voting is compulsory. As it has been demonstrated that mandatory voting rules only impact voter turnout if penalties for nonvoting are both sufficiently severe and enforced (Franklin, 1999, 2004; Panagopoulos, 2008; Singh, 2011), the measure used accounts for the enforcement of sanctions. Following Birch (2009) and Gallego (2015), the variable was coded 1 for enforced compulsory voting, .5 for non-enforced compulsory voting, and 0 for voluntary voting. Countries where voting is compulsory by law but where this law is not enforced by sanctions may also have higher voter turnouts since the duty to vote is highly internalized by the citizens. Data on compulsory voting laws was sought from the CSES Macro-Level Variables. *Majority status* deals with the electoral context and relates to the competitiveness of elections. Majority status is measured as the number of government seats divided by the total seats in the legislature. A small share of government seats indicates a competitive election and is believed to increase turnout. From a rational choice perspective, the perceived closeness of elections

enhances an individual voter's feeling that his or her vote might be decisive, thus increasing the benefits of voting (Cox & Munger, 1989).

Another possibility is that the closeness of elections increases parties' mobilization efforts (Cox, 1999; Cox & Munger, 1989), which in turn have a positive effect on turnout. Data are from the Database of Political Institutions (DPI), compiled by Teorell et al. (2010). *The proportional system* is included as the three categories, i.e., proportional, majoritarian, and mixed electoral systems. Empirical studies have reported that proportional systems tend to have a greater number of parties and a greater possibility of coalition governments; thereby, it has an adverse effect on turnout (Blais & Aartz 2006). A more ideologically fragmented political system may decrease the propensity to vote, particularly among less informed and less interested voters. Despite mixed findings [vii] (Blais, 2000), a negative relationship between proportional representation and turnout is assumed. Data on electoral representation were sought from the Quality of Government (QoG). A country's *logarithmized GDP per capita* (Purchasing Power Parity) is controlled for different degrees of economic and social development, where previous research has shown that more affluent countries display higher levels of participation (Inglehart, 1997; Curtis et al., 2001; Teorell et al., 2007). Well-developed infrastructures and high levels of income and education, which boost individual turnout, characterize well-developed countries. The data derive from the World Bank Indicators (WBI), compiled by Teorell et al. (2010). Table 4-III in the Appendix presents the descriptive statistics of dependent and independent variables.

More details on the coding of variables and the sources can be found in Table 4-IV in the Appendix.

Given the data available at the individual and the national level, the following countries and election years have been included in this analysis: Australia (1996, 2004, 2007, 2013), Austria (2008, 2013), Belgium (1999), Canada (1997, 2004, 2008), The Czech Republic (1996, 2002, 2006, 2010, 2013), Germany (1998, 2009, 2013), Denmark (1998, 2001, 2007), Estonia (2011), Finland (2003, 2007, 2011), Great Britain (1997, 2005), Hungary (1998, 2002), Ireland (2002), Italy (2006), Japan (1996, 2004, 2007, 2013), Korea (2000, 2004, 2008), The Netherlands (1998, 2006, 2010), Norway (1997, 2001, 2005, 2009, 2013), New Zealand (1996, 2002, 2008, 2011), Poland (1997, 2001, 2007, 2011), Portugal (2002, 2005, 2009, 2015), Slovakia (2010), Slovenia (2004, 2008, 2011), Spain (1996, 2000, 2004, 2008), Sweden (1998, 2002, 2006, 2014), Switzerland (1999, 2003, 2011), United States (1996, 2004, 2008). This list includes a good representation of different political systems and economic structures in well-developed countries.

Research Design

Given the fact that data were collected from 27 countries, a reasonable expectation is that respondents in the same countries resemble one another. In other words, people

surveyed during a particular election in a country are more similar to each other because they are affected by unobserved common events. Hence, one can assume a nested structure of the data. The data have a two-level hierarchical structure with individuals at level 1 nested within countries at level 2. To avoid biased standard errors and spurious significance testing, multilevel mixed-effects logistic regression models for binary responses (voted or did not vote) are fitted using the maximum likelihood method. Multilevel models allow for predictors at both the micro and macro levels and can be utilized for examining how contextual variables modify the relationships between individual-level predictors and outcomes. These models also allow for the dependency presented in nested data by adjusting for the clustering at each of the levels (e.g. Gelman & Hill, 2007; Rabe-Hesketh & Skrondal, 2008; Steenbergen & Jones, 2002; Snijders & Bosker, 1999).

The primary focus of the analysis is not on the dependent variables as such. Equality in electoral turnout is predicated on the relationship between two individual level concepts – an individual's socio-economic background and individual turnout. The strength of the relationship between those two measures determines how unequally voter turnout is distributed among different income groups. Put differently, the hypotheses of this study suggest that social policies can moderate this relationship and eventually influence the degree of inequality in political participation. I subsequently estimate random intercept models with cross-level interaction effects. The idea behind the random intercept models is that the variation in turnout may originate from both individual and country differences and the total variation in the dependent variable is split up

accordingly. The interactions actually models how social policy context moderates the effect social status has on individual electoral participation. The independent variables are entered stepwise to build up the full model: an empty model without any predictors, a model with only micro-level variables, a model where macro-level variables are added, and a model which have cross-level interaction variables. It should be noted that a relatively small number of level-2 units, i.e., country-election year, constrains the precision of the estimate of each macro-level variable. Overall, income and other individual characteristics, contextual characteristics, and the interaction of income and contextual characteristics predict the probability of individual voting. In the following analyses, since the meaning of interactions terms in non-linear models may be ambiguous (Norton et al., 2004), I estimated predicted probabilities to illustrate the joint impact of individual and contextual factors graphically.

Empirical Findings:

How ALMPs Spending Moderates Inequality in Voter Turnout

I performed multivariate statistical modeling of the data to test the two theoretical perspectives framed as competing hypotheses. Table 4-II displays the results from multilevel logistic regression analyses that predicted turnout in the last national elections. Results are presented as logit coefficients and standard errors. Beginning with empty models, the models are presented in a stepwise manner, with each successive model

building on the last. Model 2 introduces individual-level explanatory variables for the individual turnout. Models 3 introduce the context variable and the relevant controls. The central hypotheses of this study can be tested using modeling interaction effects that assess the effect of ALMP spending on the different income groups. Thus, Model 4 includes the cross-level interactions between the income groups and the policy variable. By doing so, I was able to test whether there were group-specific participatory effects according to income level.

Table 4-II. Multilevel logistic analyses of voter turnout

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Age		.73***	.73***	.74***
		(.03)	(.03)	(.03)
Age squared		-.04***	-.04***	-.04***
		(.00)	(.00)	(.00)
Gender		.03	.03	.03
		(.02)	(.02)	(.02)
Education		.3***	.3***	.3***
		(.01)	(.01)	(.01)
Income				
Second quintile		.23***	.23***	.35***
		(.03)	(.03)	(.05)
Third quintile		.40***	.41***	.56***
		(.03)	(.03)	(.05)
Fourth quintile		.59***	.59***	.69***
		(.03)	(.03)	(.05)
Highest quintile		.7***	.7***	.79***
		(.04)	(.04)	(.05)
Compulsory voting			1.5***	1.5***
			(.27)	(.27)
Majority Status			-3.0***	-3.0***
			(.77)	(.77)
Log of GDP per capita			.11	.11
			(.21)	(.21)
PR system			-.38`	-.38`
			(.21)	(.21)
ALMPs spending			.11***	.14***
			(.03)	(.03)
Income*ALMPs spending				
Second*ALMPs				-.04**
				(01)
Third*ALMPs				-.05***
				(.01)
Fourth*ALMPs				-.03**
				(.01)
Fifth*ALMPs				-.03*
				(.01)
Constant	1.91***	-1.79***	-1.56	-1.67
	(.10)	(.13)	(2.14)	(2.15)
N elections	78	78	78	78
N individuals	97366	97366	97366	97366
Rho	.19	.19	.12	.12
	(.03)	(.03)	(.02)	(.02)
Sigma_u	.77	.79	.44	.44
	(.13)	(.13)	(.07)	(.07)

p <0.1 *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p <0.001. Entries are multilevel logistic regression coefficients (standard errors).

The empty model includes only a random intercept (Model 1). The highly significant intercept (β = 1.91, p > .001) lends support to a multilevel analysis, as voting is indeed shown to vary significantly among the OECD countries. Also one can note that intra-class correlation coefficients (ICCs) calculated from the empty model amount to 19 %. The ICC figures a proportion of variance in political participation accounted for by country membership (Kreft & Leeuw, 2006). It clearly shows that the national level explanation of political participation cannot be overlooked since some variation in political participation is caused by the national level factors. This is not a surprising result, considering the well-known large effects of national-level institutions and contextual factors. Next, Model 2 includes random intercept models in which the intercept is allowed to differ across clusters. When we look first to the individual voting model, older individuals (β = .73, p > .001, age has an inverted U-shaped relationship with turnout, since the coefficient of age is positive and the coefficient of age-squared is negative), people with high levels of education (β = .3, p > .001) and income, males are more likely to have voted. Each of these individual-level predictors, save for gender, is highly significant at the 1 % level. A substantial impact can be attributed to income level. Compared to people in the lowest income group, the effects of belonging to higher income groups are both positive and significant for voting at the 1 % level. This finding supports the widely held assumption that those with greater resources are more likely to be politically involved.

In accordance with the hypothesized relationship between the public spending on empowerment-oriented ALMPs and voting, the spending indicator is shown to exert a

positive and highly significant effect (Model 3). Individuals are more likely to vote in countries where a greater percentage of the GDP is spent on empowerment-oriented ALMPs such as job training, direct job creation, and employment incentives. This effect (β = .11) is highly significant at the 1 % level for the voting model. In terms of the institutional and electoral context, compulsory voting substantially increases the propensity to vote as expected (β = 1.5, p > .001). Majority status is also fairly strongly associated with the turnout (β = -3.0). The effect of majority status works in the hypothesized direction, and its effect is significant at the 1 % level. The closer the electoral contest, the higher the rate of turnout. The natural logarithm of GDP per capita does not appear to have a substantial impact on voting. The proportional system has a significant but adverse effect. It can be argued that political fragmentation under a proportional system may augment complexity when choosing the option. Also, the probability of a coalition government under proportional system tends to make elections less decisive. Compared to the empty models, the full models for political participation constitute sizeable reductions in the overall variances attributable to differences between countries.

Up until now, the models have shown that public spending on empowerment-oriented ALMPs is able to contribute to the explanation of differences between individual voter turnout. I next examined how the relationship between income and turnout varies according to the policy context. This would imply that macro-level variables have a mediating effect on the relationship between income and individual turnout. Additionally, to test whether this type of policy focus is uniform across groups or if it promotes more

equitable levels of participation, I include cross-level interaction terms between the income categories and the spending variable in Model 4. By adding these interaction terms, we can account for the micro-micro relationship between income and political participation when looking at the relationships between individual participatory behavior and policy context. The question is if, and to what extent, low-income citizens are mobilized in high ALMPs spending countries in comparison with small spending countries.

In Model 4, the coefficient for the single public expenditure on ALMPs term (β = .14, $p < .001$) represents the effect of ALMPs spending on voting for the lowest income category. When looking first to the significance of the interaction terms, we can determine whether the effect of ALMPs spending on the voting propensity of higher income categories actually differs from the effect for the lowest income group. In Model 4, we see that the effects of ALMPs spending actually differ from the effect for the lowest income category. The values of the interaction terms are β = -.03 (p < .01), β = -.04 (p < .001), β = -.03 (p < .01), and β = -.02 (p < .05), respectively, from the second lowest income quintile to the highest income quintile. Indicated by log coefficients, which are all negative and significant for the interaction variables, the interaction effects between individual income and turnout show that the policy context indeed moderates the impact of income on electoral participation. In other words, the positive effect of income on the propensity to vote is mitigated if such income group lives in a country with high level of ALMPs spending. However, logistic regression coefficients are not intuitively interpretable. To shed light on the magnitude of the estimated effects, I calculated the

predicted probabilities of voting for different income groups using the estimates from the multilevel logistic model. Probabilities have been computed based on the multilevel regression estimates. I postulated a set of hypothetical respondents from each level of income distribution, and then estimated how the probabilities of their voting would change under different conditions of ALMP spending. So, simulation contrasts the two extremes for ALMPs spending: the maximum and the minimum. Computing estimates for what turnout would have been had ALMPs spending move from the minimum to the maximum. By doing so, this strategy captures how much the probability of voting of comparable individuals differs in different policy context. What these probabilities tell us is that, in line with my hypotheses, we can assess more explicitly the magnitude of the changes in propensity to vote for the rich and the poor as we move up the ALMPs spending scale from the minimum to maximum.

From Table 4-III, we can speak of group-specific effects: Increased ALMPs spending positively and significantly increase the propensity of low and modest income individuals to vote, compared to the size of the increase in turnout of the affluent. Table 4-III reports the estimated mean probability of voting according to the level of income, moving from the minimum to the maximum value of ALMP spending and holding the other independent variables at their means. The probability that a respondent in the lowest income quintile reports voting is 79 % when ALMPs spending as a percentage of GDP is at the minimum (0.02). In contrast, at the maximum level of ALMPs expenditure (1.75), the probability of reporting voting is 97.5 %, resulting in a sizeable increase of 19 percentage points. For the richest quintile, if we move the value of ALMPs spending

from the minimum to the maximum level, it shows a relatively smaller increase of 9 percentage points (89 → 98). In other words, the estimates suggest that the turnout gap between the lowest and the highest income quintile is 'only' 0.7 points under the maximum level of public spending on ALMPs (1.75), compared to 11 points when the level of expenditure is the lowest (0.02). The contingent effect of ALMPs spending is thus more pronounced in the low-income citizens, as hypothesized. Overall, this probability analysis tells us more intuitively that we observe less participatory distortion due to income differentials in countries with higher level of ALMPs spending.

Table 4-III. Effect of change in ALMPs spending level on individual voting by income group.

	Probability of Voting	
	Highest ALMPs spending	Lowest ALMPs spending
1st quintile	0.975***	0.788***
	(0.01)	(0.02)
2nd quintile	0.967***	0.84***
	(0.01)	(0.02)
3rd quintile	0.968***	0.866***
	(0.01)	(0.01)
4th quintile	0.979***	0.88***
	(0.01)	(0.01)
5th quintile	0.982***	0.891***
	(0.01)	(0.01)

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.

To aid the interpretation of the interaction effects, the predicted probabilities of voting are plotted across ALMPs spending by income level. The level of public spending on empowerment-oriented ALMPs is allowed to vary, while the remaining independent variables are set to their mean. Figure 4-I presents the slopes between the continuous spending measure and the binary outcome (voter turnout) according to a person's income status. Here, we can see a situation where the rising tide lifts all boats. In addition, at any level of ALMPs expenditure, the richest income quintile has a higher probability of reporting that they voted than other quintiles. However, the gradient of the relationship varies substantially depending on the values of ALMPs spending. Indeed, those in the bottom income quintile are much more likely to vote in countries with more generous ALMPs spending. We see steeper slopes for low-income groups. To some extent, they also catch up to their better-off fellow citizens. As the turnout gap between the rich and the poor decreases, a country has more investment in ALMP spending. Thus, the moderating effect of ALMPs spending on the relationship between income and voting is strongest for the poor. At the very top levels of ALMPs expenditure, turnout is much less stratified than at the bottom. Since ALMPs aimed at outsiders and the disadvantaged are likely to be of particular importance for low-income quintiles, the boosting effect in voting (as indicated by the much steeper slopes) may very well reflect an enhanced sense of efficacy, which would empower individuals to engage in electoral participation. In sum, a higher level of ALMPs spending is associated with a weaker link between an individual's level of income and her propensity to vote. Subsequently, public spending on empowerment-oriented ALMPs seems to contribute to greater turnout equality.

Figure 4-I. Marginal effects of ALMPs spending on voting
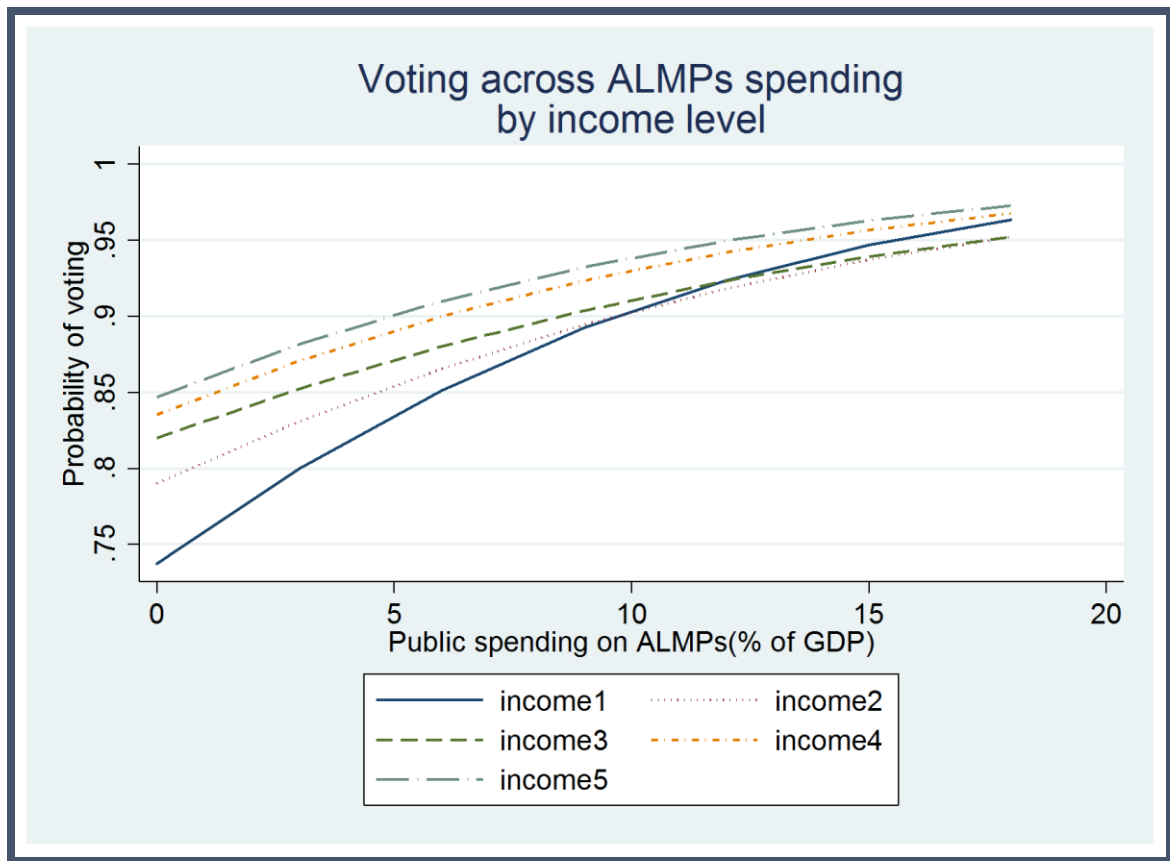
The multivariate analysis of this chapter provides support that social policy context can be a clear instance of a contextual characteristic with heterogeneous effects on different income subgroups. More investment in ALMPs increases the voter turnout rates for low-income citizens and results in a moderate level of turnout inequality. In addition to institutions and an electoral context, a social policy context is an important intervening variable in the relationship between income and political participation, as we observe less participatory distortion due to income differentials in countries with high level of ALMP spending.

Appendix

**Table 4-IV.** Variables used in the analysis

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. dev	Min	Max
Age	97366	48.95	16.86	18	100
Gender	97366	0.49	0.5	0	1
Education	97366	3.14	1.35	1	5
Income	97366	3	1.37	1	5
Turnout	97366	0.85	0.35	0	1
Political Efficacy	97366	0.69	0.46	0	1
Satisfaction with democracy	97366	0.69	0.46	0	1
Party identification	97366	0.52	0.5	0	1
Compulsory voting	78	0.12	0.32	0	1
Majority status	78	0.54	0.1	0.25	0.89
PR	78	0.67	0.41	0	1
Log of GDP per capita	78	10.29	0.38	9.08	11.11
ALMPs spending(*10)	78	3.6	3.01	0.2	17.5
Childcare spending(*10)	78	8.1	5.31	0	21.6

Table 4-V. Coding of variables and sources

Variable	Operationalization	Source
Dependent variable		
Electoral turnout	Dummy: Voted in last national election, 1=Yes, 0=No	the CSES, A2028, B3004_1, C3021_1, D3007_LH. Available for download at http://www.cses.org
Individual level variable		
Age	Age in years of respondent	the CSES, A2001, B2001, C2001, D2001_Y
Gender	Dummy: 0=female, 1=male	the CSES, A2002, B2002, C2002, D2002
Education	Primary or less=1, Incomplete secondary=2, Complete secondary=3, Postsecondary=4, University education=5	the CSES, A2003, B2003, C2003, D2003
Income	Reported income levels (1 to 5 quintiles)	the CSES, A2012, B2020, C2020, D2020
Political efficacy	Dummy: Respondents who say "who people vote for make difference to what happen"=1, "it won't make any difference"=0	the CSES, A3029, B3014, C3005, D3010
Satisfaction with democracy	Dummy: Respondents who say "very or fairly satisfied"=1, "not very or not at all"=0	the CSES, A3001, B3012, C3019, D3017
Party identification	Dummy: Respondents who say "feel close to any particular party"=1, "no"=0	the CSES, A3004, B3028, C3020_1, D3018_1
Country-level variables		
ALMPs spending	Sum of the public spending on training programs, direct job creation, and employment incentives as a percentage of the GDP	the OECD, Social Expenditure Database(SOCX). Http://data.oecd.org
Childcare spending	Public spending on 'benefits in kind for family' as a percentage of the GDP	the OECD, Social Expenditure Database(SOCX)
Compulsory voting	Degree of compulsory voting with regard to severity and enforcement. 1=Strictly or weakly enforced sanctions, .5=without sanctions, 0=Non-compulsory voting	the CSES, A5031, B5037, C5044_1, D5044_1
Majority Status	Number of government seats divided by the total seats in the legislature (dpi_maj)	the Database of Political Institutions (DPI, 2015). Http://publications.iadb.org

PR	Countries with proportional electoral system. 1=Proportional systems, .5=Mixed systems, 0=Majoritarian systems	the QoG dataset. Http://qog.pol.gu.se/data
Log of GDP per capita	Natural log of GDP per capita(PPP US$)	the World Bank Indicators. compiled by Teorell et al.(2010). Http://data.worldbank.org

Table 4-VI : Country-Election Year specific public spending on ALMPs and Childcare

Country-Year	ALMP	Childcare
AUS_1996	0.24	0.601
AUS_2004	0.1	0.638
AUS_2007	0.07	0.676
AUS_2013	0.02	0.897
AUT_2008	0.45	0.477
AUT_2013	0.56	0.648
BEL_1999	0.58	0.813
CAN_1997	0.17	0.113
CAN_2004	0.11	0.192
CAN_2008	0.12	0.204
CHE_1999	0.34	0.255
CHE_2003	0.32	0.308
CHE_2011	0.23	0.354
CZE_1996	0.03	0.119
CZE_2002	0.07	0.51
CZE_2006	0.07	0.547
CZE_2010	0.13	0.541
CZE_2013	0.1	0.547
DEU_1998	0.82	0.775
DEU_2009	0.51	0.914
DEU_2013	0.26	0.973
DNK_1998	1.21	1.983
DNK_2001	1.1	2.062
DNK_2007	0.49	2.158

ESP_1996	0.24	0.191
ESP_2000	0.61	0.667
ESP_2004	0.54	0.673
ESP_2008	0.49	0.742
EST_2011	0.12	0.395
FIN_2003	0.62	1.309
FIN_2007	0.57	1.342
FIN_2011	0.71	1.647
FRA_2002	0.78	1.504
FRA_2007	0.57	1.229
GBR_1997	0.08	0.466
GBR_2005	0.03	0.995
HUN_1998	0.26	1.176
HUN_2002	0.38	1.179
IRL_2002	0.64	0.49
ITA_2006	0.36	0.777
JPN_1996	0.05	0.34
JPN_2004	0.12	0.435
JPN_2007	0.03	0.365
JPN_2013	0.11	0.471
KOR_2000	0.31	0.107
KOR_2004	0.05	0.227
KOR_2008	0.21	0.703
NLD_1998	0.43	0.722
NLD_2006	0.27	1.251
NLD_2010	0.3	0.905

NOR_1997	0.6	1.268
NOR_2001	0.45	1.26
NOR_2005	0.46	1.265
NOR_2009	0.3	1.753
NOR_2013	0.2	1.794
NZL_1996	0.44	0.319
NZL_2002	0.2	0.619
NZL_2008	0.14	0.926
NZL_2011	0.12	1.108
POL_1997	0.26	0
POL_2001	0.12	0.206
POL_2007	0.17	0.285
POL_2011	0.1	0.595
PRT_2002	0.42	0.695
PRT_2005	0.44	0.464
PRT_2009	0.56	0.471
PRT_2015	0.52	0.446
SVK_2010	0.12	0.424
SVN_2004	0.18	0.579
SVN_2008	0.07	0.5
SVN_2011	0.19	0.538
SWE_1998	1.75	1.733
SWE_2002	0.89	1.624
SWE_2006	0.74	1.88
SWE_2014	0.79	2.144
USA_1996	0.08	0.286

USA_2004	0.06	0.612
USA_2008	0.09	0.6

*The maximum and minimum values for ALMPs and Childcare spending are highlighted.

ⁱ Who is included in these groups labeled as 'outsider' can vary by specific programs, but inevitably, individuals who are unemployed, underemployed or otherwise precarious in the labor market, that is without secure employment are included (Anderson, 2009).

ⁱⁱ Social policies not only enhance participatory resources but also inspire an emancipative worldview among low income citizens. This underlying theme of empowerment is consistent with Welzel and Inglehart (2008)'s approach of effective democracy. When it comes to the key ingredients for human empowerment, Welzel and Inglehart (2008) put an emphasis on self-expression values which indicate the level of motivations in making people willing to govern their lives. Under conditions of economic scarcity, material sustenance and income security are the first requirements for survival. When survival is precarious, the desire for free choice and autonomy may be subordinated to the needs for subsistence and order. Conversely, rising levels of existential security may leads ordinary people to get a sense of human autonomy and self-expression. These self-expression values provide a motivational power for expressing one's preference and do translate into pro-democratic mass actions. Under high level of social protection policies, economically marginalized people with high risk exposure become more secure by material means, more access to training for skill upgrades, and more opportunities to be socially connected. Consequently, free choice and control over one's life can be a deep-rooted psychological payoff of risk-buffering labor market regime. In the word of Welzel and Inglehart(2008), "when people have relatively ample economic and political resources, and move from emphasizing survival values towards emphasizing self-expression values, they strive more strongly for democratic institutions."(138)

ⁱⁱⁱ Offe(2014:10) challenges the canonical prediction of classical political economy which suggests that a high level of inequality and social insecurity will in any way automatically lead to popular demands for redistributive policies and political actions. From classical political economy perspective, the opportunity costs of non-participation can be safely assumed to be greater for the resource-poor that for the resource-rich. That would lead us to expect that the poorer, the less educated, and the more insecure people are in their socio-economic status, the more eagerly they

should seek to put their political rights to use. Yet this is not the case not just due to the lack of information, but also due to the lack of confidence that political involvement is worth the effort.(Offe, 2014: 13). In practice, the perceived inability or/and unwillingness of the governing body to respond to inequalities through the adoption of redistributive measures have become so evident that citizens affected by these conditions have given up raising their voice and actions. To bridge this evident gap between theory and reality, Offe(2014: 9-10) proposes an alternative framework of 'interpretive political economy', which means that an understanding of social action and its cognitive foundations are affected by peoples' lived experience of the interplay of economic and political forces in contemporary capitalist democracies.

[iv] Marx (2014) also does not support the notion of political alienation of temporary workers, who are considered labor market outsiders. His finding suggests that they do not exhibit lower levels of party identification or other signs of political disenchantment, such as a lacking satisfaction with democracy or trust in political parties.

[v]As Kreckhaus et al.(2013) point out, one of the misleading assumptions in political economy of inequality is that democracy is presumed to be the political system that best empowers the poor to advance their interest (Meltzer & Richard, 1981; Knack & Keefer 1997; Acemoglu & Robinson, 2006). The underlying logic is that the poor support democratization because it gives them a tool to advance their material interests in future policy struggles for redistribution. Contrary to this prospective theorizing, performance-based or political culture literature stress retrospective evaluations which posit that citizens evaluate the past history of their political system.(Dahl, 1971; Welzel & Inglehart, 2008) If inequality is high, then a retrospective perspective suggests that citizens criticize democracy as having performed badly and they are less likely to be satisfied with the way democracy works. High inequality therefore lends the masses to withdraw their support from democratic governance, or forgo their right to vote. In this line of reasoning, it is important to note that all citizens are neither uniformly affected by income inequality nor react homogeneously to rising inequality, and inequality's perverse effects on political participation vary across the socioeconomic spectrum.

[vi] Indeed, ALMPs can and have been measured in different ways, including as total spending as a percentage of GDP, spending per unemployed person, etc. As it turns out, these measures are highly correlated (Martin, 2000) and produce similar results.

[vii] Blais and Dobrzynska (1998: 24) enumerate the boosting effect of PR system on turnout. "First, PR is a fairer system, and because it is fair people feel less alienated and thus more inclined to vote, Second, PR increase the number of parties and the variety of options among which people can choose, Third, PR makes elections more competitive; as there are many members to be elected in each district, most parties have a chance to win at least one seat and as a consequence they attempt to mobilize voters throughout the country."

Chapter 5

Gender Gap in Turnout and Childcare Policy

Gender Gap in Political Participation

Another relevant cleavage in turnout inequality is gender. Men and women differ in terms of type and extent of their political involvement. After enfranchisement, women traditionally participated less than men in democracies around the world. In fact, in recent decades, women have made great strides in voter turnout. Yet, while in general gender disparity is being reduced in Western societies, women continue to report less political involvement across a host of participatory activities and attitudes including joining political parties, attending demonstrations, political interest, and efficacy (Inglehart & Norris, 2003, Burns et al., 2001)[i].

Overall, women are less likely to participate in politics, as they have fewer resources (Paxton et al., 2007). Their social networks are different from men's in several ways (Lin, 2000): they are, in general, smaller and show a larger proportion of kin and neighbors. Moreover, women generally take up time-consuming care tasks. Indeed, the resource of time is highly determined by "such life circumstances as having a job, a

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spouse who works, or children especially preschool children." (Schlozman et al., 1999: 433) Warr (2006) suggests that there are certain aspects that cause women from socioeconomically disadvantaged neighborhoods, with small incomes, to rarely participate in voluntary associations. Specifically, a lack of skills, time, and money as well as their concern with their everyday problems keep them away from associational involvement. In addition to the actual circumstances, women's participation can be further restricted by norms about gender roles. As a result, women participate less in political activities in general. These inequalities in political participation undermine the quality of deliberation, representation, and legitimacy in the democratic process.

At the same time, countries vary substantially in the size of these gender gaps. Comparative research has supported the gender gap[ii] in favor of men (Burns et al., 2001; Karp & Banducci, 2007). For instance, for all seven countries in their cross-national study in the 1970s, Verba, Nie, and Kim(1978) found that men voted at higher rates than women. Yet recent decades ushered in more equal rates of voter participation. In the U.S. presidential elections, women have outvoted men. In the 2012 presidential election, the proportion of eligible women voting was 63.7% and the proportion of men was 59.8% (Center for American Women and Politics, 2014). Comparative research offers support for this trend as well. Across several European democracies in the 1980s, women were voting at similar rates to men (Christy, 1987).

More egalitarian levels of voter turnout in recent decades can be attributed to greater equality in some of the factors that encourage voting for men and women alike. Relative to the past, many societies today witness greater gender equality in education and workforce participation. However, it is important to note that women have not yet achieved full equality in these areas.

This chapter studies differences in the levels of unequal participation by gender across post-industrial democracies and refers to the contextual feature that can help explain these differences: public spending on childcare policy. Increasing female labor force participation and the erosion of the male-breadwinner/female-caregiver family model necessitate that mothers with young children increasingly reconcile paid work in the labor market and care responsibilities at home. Consequently, "work/family reconciliation" has become a buzzword in policy debates and formal childcare provision has gained prominence among other reconciliation policies, such as parental leave schemes and flexible work settings. As discussed in Chapter 3, the policy shift towards growth, work and social inclusion has been increasingly incorporated into the broader policy narrative on 'social investment' and 'active social policy.' Along with labor market activation, policies focusing on care services are also at the center of the social investment agenda. Hence, investment in family-oriented services, as functionally equivalent to spending on labor market activation, is expected to have a boosting effect on the participation of the targeted group: women.

In the following, I provide a brief overview of the development of childcare services and address previous research on the gender gap in voter turnout. Then, I hypothesize its moderating effect on the gender gap in turnout. Using the same dataset from the CSES and multilevel model, I probe the validity of the claim that the degree of participatory inequality between men and women is shaped by the level of social support for childcare.

Childcare Policy

Childcare policy has become an integral part of social and economic policy in post-industrial democracies. As discussed in Chapter 3, the shift from the industrial economy towards the post-industrial service economy has compelled citizens to face new types of social risks. It has also required modern welfare states to respond to new social needs and demands with policy instruments beyond standard cash benefits for male breadwinners. New social risks are defined as "the risks that people now face in the course of their lives as a result of the economic and social changes associated with the transition to a post-industrial society." (Taylor-Gooby, 2004:3). These socioeconomic changes encompass the feminization of the labor force, lower birth rate, and improved longevity, and the transformation of family form and norms and so other aspects. In this context, the key problem facing policymakers is how to make it possible for parents to be in the labor market and simultaneously have children and care for them. Childcare, quite obviously, is the backbone of any policy aimed at facilitating the conciliation of work and

family life. Following Bonoli (2013), this study took childcare policy as one of the two core components of active social policy in response to new social risks.

The promotion of labor market participation has not been confined to labor market policy. Family policies have also been reoriented so as to pursue this goal, essentially through policies that facilitate labor market participation for parents. The provision of subsidized childcare is the main pillar of this reorientation. However, under this rubric, one could also include policies that allow parent-workers time off to care for their young children, more flexibility in working hours, or other forms of help with reconciling work and family life. Relevant policy measures include maternity and parental leave, flexible working time policies, and above all, subsidized childcare. The provision of subsidized childcare may be used to pursue different aims. It can facilitate maternal employment, but it can also impact a child's well being. Childcare and early education programs have been shown to be beneficial to child development. The beneficial effect primarily concerns children from disadvantaged families. Childcare, by facilitating parental employment, can also be part of a strategy to tackle child poverty. Publicly subsidized childcare may also be of interest to employers. In the context of the shortage of skilled labor that results from population ageing, the opportunity to recruit female employees without needing to provide costly childcare facilities is certainly appealing to employers. However, in this chapter, I focus more on the active social policy aspect fo childcare services – i.e, its role in facilitating access to employment for parents of young children. This means that the educational or cross-class coalitional functions of childcare, though they are important, are not considered in this study.

On average, OECD countries spent 0.91 % of their GDP on various childcare services in 2013. Yet cross-national differences are striking: the amount of public spending on childcare and preschool services varies between 0.22 (Turkey) and 2.43 % (Iceland) of GDP. Upon review of the spending figures, the period between 1990 and 2013 is characterized by an increase in the funds assigned to early education and childcare in most countries. Its timing differs, especially with Northern European countries which experienced the massive entry of women into labor markets a couple of decades before their Southern counterparts.

In summary, the promotion of childcare services agrees with the general trend of 'active social policy'. In addition, the provision of quality formal child daycare services is now considered to be a 'social investment' in younger children who are regarded as the future workforce. Hence, public childcare programs are an indispensable policy tool to help mothers with preschool age children to reconcile career development and family life and boost the labor supply of female citizens with care responsibilities (activation) (Hieda, 2013).

Before moving on to the empirical analysis, it is important to address whether it is justified to lump together different policies under the active social policy label. Interestingly, the two seemingly unrelated areas, ALMPs and childcare services, display patterns of cross-national variation, which are surprisingly similar. This finding is also discernible in the spending figures, which show that spending on ALMPs and childcare

are strongly correlated. As seen in Figure 5-II, this bivariate scatterplot suggests that policies characterized here as active do have something in common (Bonoli, 2013: 43-44). ALMPs and childcare tend to co-vary also between and within other clusters of welfare states.

Figure 5-I. Public spending on childcare and early education services, percent of GDP
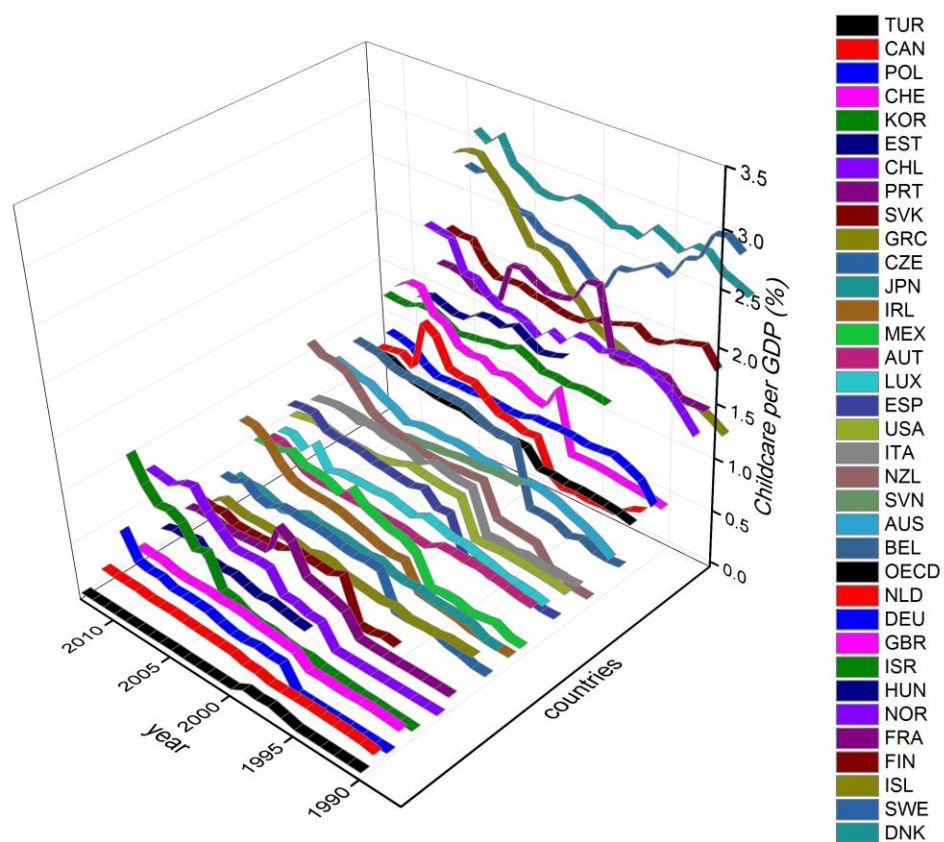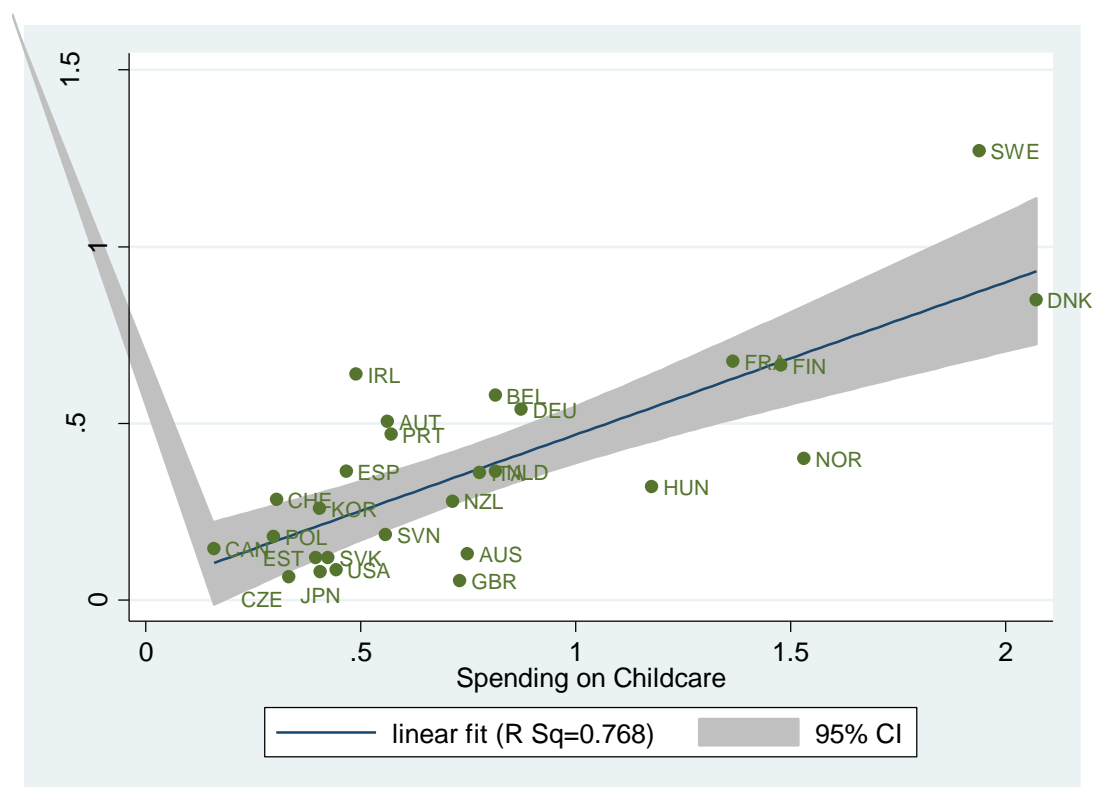
Figure 5-II: Scatterplot between spending on childcare & early education services and on active labor market policies, country mean. Source: OECD Stat.

The Gender Gap in Turnout and the Moderating Role of

Childcare Policy

Two lines of reasoning underlie traditional explanations for gender differences in political participation: resource-based mobilization (economic and socioeconomic development) and cultural traditions (Kittilson & Schwindt-Bayer, 2006). In their seminal work, Inglehart and Norris (2003) argue that perceptions of appropriate roles for women and men in politics are shaped by broader patterns of societal values and priorities, which in turn rest on economic development and religious traditions. More economically developed and secular countries are associated with more egalitarian gender attitudes. Yet, gender differences in political participation persist even after accounting for economics and culture.

The two dominant explanations for the gender gap in political participation, resource and cultural theories, have been unable to account for all of the cross-national variation in men's participation and women's participation[iii]. I argue that a third line of reasoning is necessary to explain gender differences in political attitudes and behaviors: the policy context. I focus on the role that public policies play in promoting or hindering political engagement. Public policies can act as symbols and send signals to citizens about the importance of inclusiveness in the democratic process. The public policies that encourage the excluded to participate in politics should have a larger effect on that group's political participation and should narrow the gender gap. In contrast, for men, the

macro-level context will exert less influence. Overall, government measures that redistribute resources and enhance the incentive to vote should have the discernable leveling effect for the targeted group. Hence, I highlight the role of child care programs in providing not just resources to participate but also an incentive to vote for women.

Childcare policies can enhance the opportunities for women in political life by redistributing care and household tasks. Gender gaps in electoral turnout can be partly attributed to large-scale social structures, which enhance or limit women's' education and employment opportunities (Paxton et al., 2007). For instance, child care, maternity leave and positive discrimination in the job market (Esping-Andersen, 1999) are ways in which states redistribute care tasks and employment (Geist, 2005) and thereby remove part of the restrictions that hinder participation.

The key research question is, therefore, if and how childcare policies influence men's and women's levels of political participation. I argue that public policy carries cognitive cues to males and females in society. I expect that childcare policy will have a larger effect on women's political participation relative to men's.

> H3: The effect of gender on voter turnout is smaller in countries that spend a large share of their gross domestic product on childcare policies than in countries with limited expenditure on childcare policy.

Research Design

As already mentioned in Chapter 4, I conducted an empirical analysis using the CSES dataset, and it covered various topics that are considered important for predicting political behavior. The dataset provides us with information from 27 countries, with a total of 97,366 respondents. This proposition is tested with data on public in-kind benefit expenditure for families in 27 OECD countries from 1996 until 2015.

As this study focused on the effect of childcare policy on gender-based stratification pattern with regard to voter turnout, self-reported voting during the most recent elections was used as the primary dependent variable. This variable is a dichotomy, with a score of 1 indicating that respondents did vote, and 0 indicating that they did not vote.

The main independent variable at the country level is public spending for childcare services as a percentage of the gross domestic product (GDP). Aggregate spending levels are now considered to be a poor measure for the outcomes of welfare provision, and it is often suggested that these outcomes should be directly measured with a certain index in an empirical study. Nevertheless, this study usesd public spending for childcare services as its dependent variable. First, due to data limitation, public

expenditure as a percentage of GDP is the best available measure of the generosity and volume of public childcare services and subsidies. The generosity of public childcare programs should be measured with their coverage, the length of opening hours (part-time or full-time), the staff-to-child ratio, the educational and training attainment of teachers and other factors. Although a composite index incorporating all of these factors might be preferable, public spending can be transformed into any of these aspects. Hence, public spending may be more appropriate for social services than transfer programs to measure each government's policy efforts devoted to them. Thus, its use of an aggregate spending indicator as an approximation of welfare efforts is justifiable.

To measure the size of public spending on childcare programs, the study used, as its approximation, public expenditure for 'benefits in kind for family' as a percentage of GDP from the OECD (2016) Social Expenditure Database (SOCX), which subdivides each category into cash benefits and benefits in kind. The public programs classified under the 'family' branch are "often related to the costs associated with raising children or with the support of other dependents." (Adema & Ladaique, 2009: 18) Although it also includes some other minuscule programs (e.g., child abuse prevention), the category of benefits in kind for family mainly consists of public spending for child daycare services.

At the individual level, I mainly examined gender variable. Gender was coded as a dummy: male was coded as 1, and female was coded as 0.

The estimation model includes the same controls for the variables examined in Chapter 4 (ALMPs spending and income-skewed turnout). More details on the coding of variables can be found in the Appendix of Chapter 4.

Since the CSES can be considered as a nested dataset, a multilevel analysis was applied, which takes intro-class correlation into account and provides correct standard errors (Snijders and Bosker, 1999). Since the dependent variable was dichotomous, I used a logistic regression model.

Cross-national Evidence of the Association between Childcare Policy and the Participation of Women

The results of the multivariate analysis suggest that, all else being equal, women have a higher predicted probability of voting in countries that spend more on childcare policy than in countries that spend less. The interaction of childcare spending and gender was found to be negative and significant (β = -.02, p < .001). This suggests that the relationship between gender and voting is weaker in countries with higher spending on childcare services. In contrast, the gradient of gender is steeper in countries with lower childcare spending. The individual level coefficients showed the expected signs. Education (coded in five categories), age (modeled curvilinearly to account for the possibility that voter turnout declines at old age), and income (coded in five quintiles) are

all associated with voter turnout in the expected directions. With regard to country-level controls, compulsory voting still has a significant boosting effect on turnout. The competitiveness of elections is positively associated with the turnout at a significant level. Neither GDP per capita nor proportional system has a significant impact. For more find-grained data tailored to women with young children, I also ran the multilevel model with women between age 25 and 45. The result was consistent with the present results, even stronger (β = -.03, p < .001).

Logistic regression coefficients are not intuitively interpretable. In order to shed light on the magnitude of the estimated effects, I calculated the predicted probabilities of voting for men and women using the estimates from logistic model. The level of childcare spending varies from the minimum to the maximum value. The results are displayed in Table 5-I and Figure 5-III.

Table 5-I. Multilevel model of voter turnout: childcare spending and gender

	Voting
Individual-level variables	
Age	.74***
	(.03)
Age squared	-.04***
	(.00)
Gender	.2***
	(.04)
Education	.3***
	(.01)
Income	.18***
	(.01)
Country-level variables	
Childcare spending	.07***
	(.02)
Gender*Childcare	-.02***
	(.00)
Compulsory voting	1.5***
	(.28)
Majority Status	-2.57**
	(.8)
Log of GDP per capita	-.17
	(.23)
PR	-.26
	(.21)
Constant	.66
	(2.34)
R	.12
	(.02)
Sigma_u	.45
	(.08)
N of elections	78
N of respondents	97366

*p <.05 **p <.01 ***p <.001, Entries are multilevel logistic regression coefficients (standard error)

Based on the estimated probabilities of voting, we can better determine how public spending on childcare impacts the political behavior of women. Increased childcare spending positively and significantly enhances the propensity of women to vote. Increases in childcare spending exert a boosting effect on all individuals, but given the significant interaction for gender, we see that this effect is stronger for women. The probability that woman reports voting is 0.82, and it is 0.85 for men at the minimum level of childcare spending. In contrast, at the highest level of childcare spending, the probability of reporting voting is 0.96 for women, and 0.94 for men. The size of the gaps in the turnout rates of men and women substantially reduces as childcare spending increases, and this gap is then reversed at the maximum level of childcare spending.

Table 5-II. Effect of change in childcare spending level on individual voting by gender.

	Probability of Voting	
	Lowest level of childcare spending	Highest level of childcare spending
Women	0.82***	0.96***
	(0.02)	(.01)
Men	0.85***	0.94***
	(0.02)	(.01)

*p <.05 **p <.01 ***p <.001, Standard errors in parentheses.

Figure 5-III. Marginal effects of childcare spending on voting

Voting across Child Care spending by gender
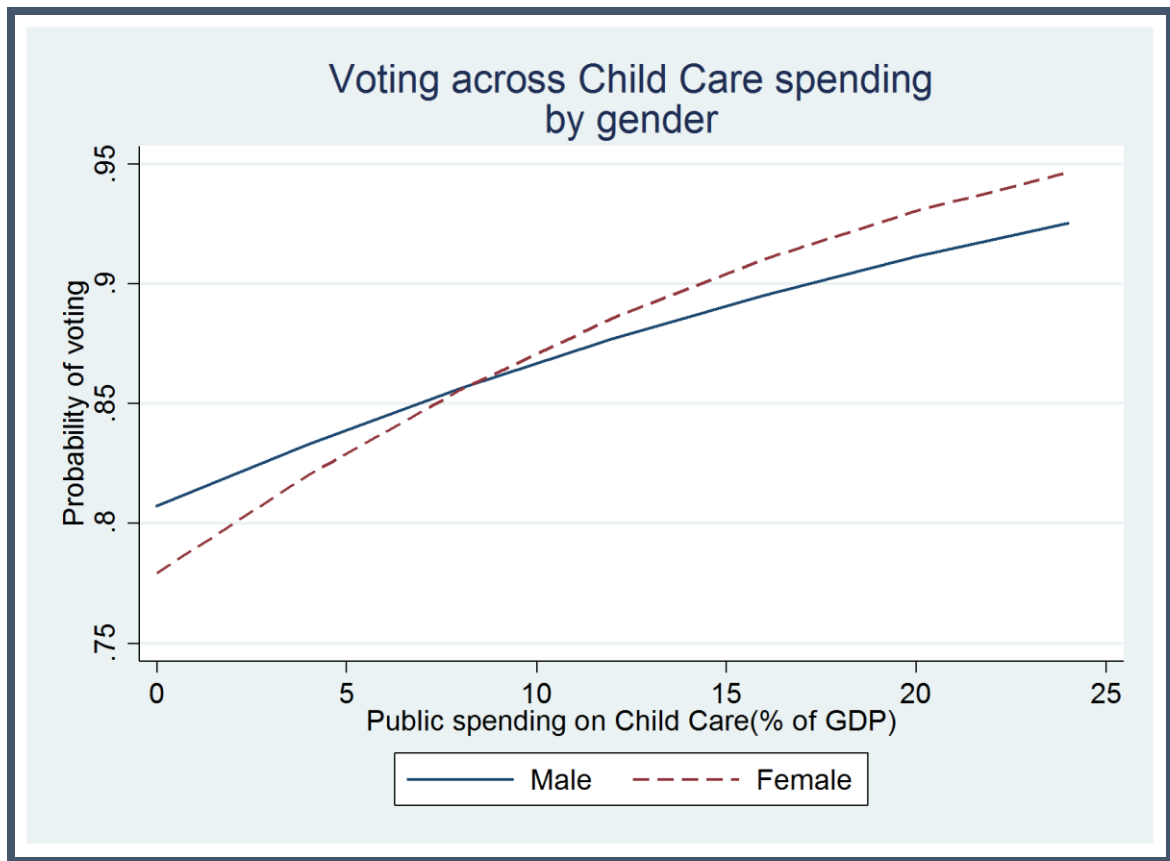
Summary

In sum, the cross-national analysis provides support for the hypothesis that a state's investment in childcare services modifies gender-based turnout disparity and generates more favorable conditions for the political participation of women. This finding implies that the use of gender-sensitive social policies, such as childcare and work-family reconciliation policies, boosts the voter turnout rates of women and results in smaller levels of turnout inequality between men and women.

This finding emphasizes the significance of childcare services as a policy tool to activate mothers with young children across advanced industrialized countries. Childcare services and ALMPs spending tap into similar policy instruments to respond to new social needs and demands. As discussed in Chapter 3, the consequences of these activation measures for society and polity thus go beyond their economic role in managing labor market outcomes and also help to sustain social inclusion (Anderson, 2009; Lee, 2012). These positive externalities that are typically overlooked in analyses should be taken into account when examining the micro-level consequences of policies. This chapter also confirms the fact that government measures that redistribute resources and enhance incentive should have a leveling effect by remedying the social stratification of political participation.

[i] Some research seems to reveal another participation pattern for non-institutionalized form of participation (Micheletti, 2004; Stolle & Hooghe, 2005). According to them, non-institutionalized participation has the potential to mobilize women more effectively in the political process, especially in comparison to electoral politics and participation in political parties (Stolle & Hooghe, 2005)

[ii] The term 'gender gap' is commonly used to refer to gender differences in voting preferences and to levels of political participation (Kittilson, 2016).

[iii] In comparative politics, only a few studies have addressed the relationship between women's representation and political engagement. Drawing on surveys of European adolescents, Wolbrecht and Campbell (2007) find that differences in intentions to participate among boys and girls narrow in countries with more women in office. In contrast, Karp and Banducci's (2007) study of 29 developing and developed democracies offers little support for a symbolic impact of women in office on mass participation.

Chapter 6

Participatory Attitudes as a Mechanism

The previous chapter emphasized that the key question does not concern the reason why poor people do not vote; rather, it addresses the contexts that made them less politically active. The primary finding of this study shows that social policy can have an equalizing effect on unequal distribution of voting over social categories. In other words, cross-national differences in participatory inequality among advanced nations are to some degree a function of the extent of spending on programs catering to the needs of the socially disadvantaged. Indeed, it has been demonstrated that active electoral participation by less advantaged segments of society is positively associated with government welfare spending (Hicks & Swank, 1992; Mueller & Stratmann, 2003; Hill & Leighley, 1992). Then, the following question is *how* the contextual intermediaries make variations in participatory equality among countries. To address this puzzle, it is important to discuss the mechanisms which (re)produce such an unequal distribution of the propensity to vote (Van Oorschot & Finsveen, 2010: 4).

In this chapter, I shed light on the built-in incentives for citizens to make a full use of the political rights under certain social conditions, which make the less privileged citizens feel more encouraged to actually participate in politics. In Chapter 3, I hypothesized that generous social protection instills psychological resources critical for

political action in the minds of citizens. Psychological benefits engendered by social policies can translate into political actions. Accordingly, this chapter aims to clarify the mechanisms through which social protection can be connected to the inculcation of participatory attitudes and behaviors in the minds of citizens. By incorporating a motivational parameter alongside objective resources, this chapter seeks to identify attitudinal mechanisms linking public policy and political participation.

Capacity-building aspects of public policies are an overlooked area where citizens can learn the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and develop the skills and motivations to sustain a liberal political culture. The demonstration that public policies are still able to reduce inequalities, tame markets, and subject them to democratic control could motivate the participation of those parts of the citizenry who have turned away from it in frustration. To capture this process and develop a causal mechanism, I focus on the engagement (motivation) part in the model translated as participatory attitudes, with the aim to understand why policy context might influence citizens' decision to engage politically. Indeed, a broad body of research has been especially concerned with subjective attitudes as antecedents to political participation (Easton & Dennis, 1967; Barnes & Kaase, 1979; Verba & Nie, 1972; Verba et al., 1995). To explore the role of basic political attitudes as possible mechanisms linking public policy to greater participation by lower-status groups, I include three measures of participatory attitudes in the model: external efficacy, satisfaction with democracy and strength of partisan identification.[i] Each taps a source of voter participation identified in previous turnout

studies (Abramson & Aldrich, 1982; Teixeira 1992) and each is posited to have a positive relationship to turnout (Darmofal, 2008).

I speculate that low-income individuals will have lower levels of external efficacy, satisfaction with the democratic process, and partisan identification. Additionally, the relationship between income and these attitudes will be intensified in countries with a lower level of ALMPs spending. Low-income citizens who reside in communities with lesser spending on ALMPs will be the most likely to have lower levels of participatory attitudes. On the other hand, low-income individuals living in countries with the pro-outsider policy will not experience the same level of relative deprivation and will be less likely to perceive themselves as powerless in the political system. Hence, the relationship between income and participatory attitudes will be weakened as governments spend more money on labor market activation. The proposed mechanism is illustrated in Figure 6-I.

The theoretical argument behind the causal mechanism will be tested explicitly to demonstrate the extent to which the relationship between policy context and political participation is mediated by participatory attitudes. Also, I will test whether these positive consequences of ALMPs spending are equal across all individuals or more powerful among low-income individuals.

Before probing the empirical validity of these hypotheses, the impact of ALMPs spending on the social stratification of participatory attitudes is addressed. After outlining

three types of participatory attitudes, I discuss how these attitudes and electoral participation are connected.

Figure 6-I. Interaction between labor market activation and individual participatory attitudes
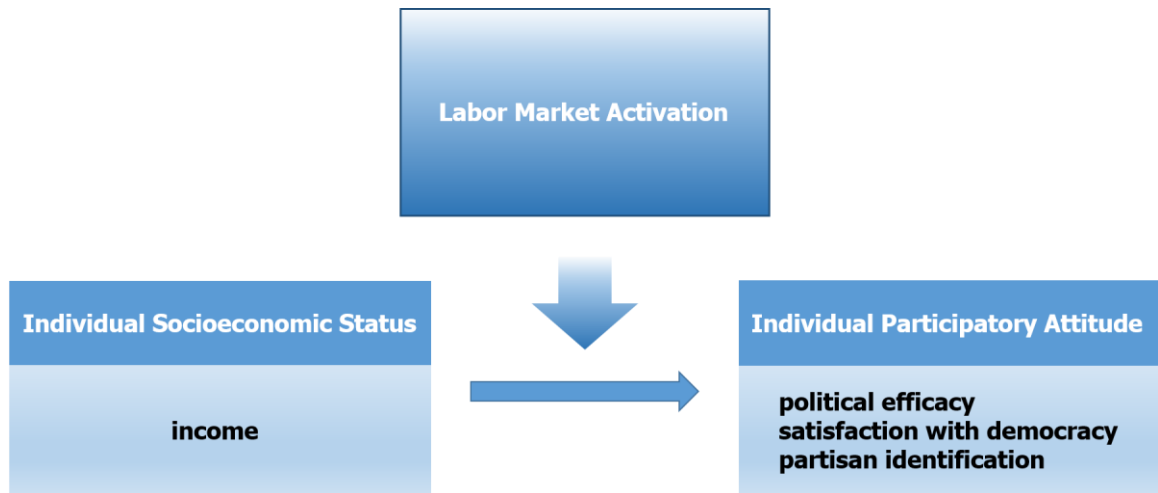
Effects of ALMPs on Participatory Attitudes

In general, active labor market policies are designed to help people find and maintain jobs. By influencing the market behavior of individuals, especially of those marginal to the labor market, they are intended to produce desirable macroeconomic outcomes, such as lower wage pressures and lower unemployment and vacancy rates.

The relevant question here is whether labor market policies also shape attitudes and behaviors that are not directly related to the job market. I view the effect of public policy through the lens of the policy feedback approach and capture significant positive externalities that are typically overlooked by analyses (Anderson, 2009; Lee, 2012). Put simply, the general notion underlying studies on policy feedback is that the designs of policies shape people's attitudes toward government, their partisan and ideological orientations, and patterns of political participation (Campbell, 2008). Such a conception of the impact of public policy enables us to argue that policies can have positive consequences via 'interpretative' effects by shaping citizens' sense of their role, status, and identity, as well as 'resource' effects, through which policies furnish resources and incentives that shape behavior (Pierson, 1993; Mettler, 2002).

Based on a broadened conception of how labor market policies shape behavior, I posit that labor market policies engender positive externalities for people's social

inclusion and perception of the working of the political system. ALMPs are expected to reduce the material and psychological burdens of labor market marginalization among targeted populations, and in particular, reduce the chances that such individuals will feel socially excluded and abandoned. Specifically, I hypothesize that ALMPs enable individuals by elevating their skills, enhancing their information about employment, improving their job search skills, and placing them in temporary or permanent employment. In doing so, they can alleviate the economic distress associated with being an outsider, as well as enhance their self-efficacy and perceptions of social cohesion. The consequences of labor market policies for society and polity thus go beyond their economic role in managing labor market outcomes. Thus, if public policies indeed have feedback effects on political behavior, and if ALMPs affect how people think about themselves and the government as a policy supplier, then there is also good reason to assume that the effects of such policies may go beyond narrowly defined and specific labor market-related attitudes and behaviors.

Lower levels of subjective well-being among the un- or under-employed lead to discouragement, lower levels of skill acquisition, inferior performance in job interviews, and eventually a lower probability of job offers and successful job searches. ALMPs are expected to counteract these adverse psychological effects of outsider status by reducing people's labor market insecurity and increasing the efficacy of job search behavior. By adopting a conception of the policy feedback effects, I examine the impact of ALMPs on people's participatory attitudes, which are expected to boost political participation. Though the model described above proposes that labor market policies have an impact on

participatory attitudes, it does not expect that they will affect everyone equally. Instead, I assume that the effect of labor market policies will be different depending on individuals' position on the ladder of income and their degree of risk exposure. Thus, ALMPs will have a stronger effect on the participatory attitudes of lower-status individuals.

Three Types of Participatory Attitudes

Some of the variables might be perceived as steps in the causal chain linking the interaction between social policy context and income to the propensity to participate. Rather than implicitly assuming that low-income individuals in countries with more spending on pro-outsider policy perceive their situation as less risk and thus are more motivate to engage in politics than the same type of citizen in less spending countries, one could include adequate attitudinal variables in the model.

I explore the role of basic political attitudes as possible mechanisms linking social policy to the greater participation of low-status groups. The CSES does not have an abundance of attitudinal variables, but some survey items allow us to glimpse at the mediating role of political attitudes. First, the link between resources and participation is thought to function through both internal and external political efficacies. Internal efficacy refers to people's beliefs regarding their own capabilities to understand and effectively participate in politics. External efficacy is generally described as the feeling

that government authorities and institutions are responsive to citizen demands. Policies can impact the extent to which individuals believe that they possess the skills and opportunities to be politically active (internal political efficacy) and whether they believe the government is responsive to their concerns and that they have the ability to affect political outcomes (external political efficacy). Political efficacy, in turn, is strongly linked to socioeconomic status (Shore, 2014: 43). Regarding participation, studies have shown that citizens who feel that they have the ability to influence politics are more likely to become involved in politics. Empirically, political efficacy can be considered a relatively reliable predictor of political participation (Verba et al. 1995; Sullivan and Riedel 2001). For instance, Emmenegger et al. (2015) have found that labor market disadvantage translates into voting abstention or protest voting through the lower external political efficacy. Hence, the subjective assessment of one's potential to have an influence is vital for the decision to act politically.

Second, a key factor of political mobilization is satisfaction. It could be assumed that people who are highly satisfied with the government and the political system are less likely to be non-voters because they see voting as their civic duty (Goodin and Roberts 1975). Conversely, Klages (1984) interprets dissatisfaction with the political system and governmental policies as the primary determinant that supports the genesis of political interest and political participation. As such, studies that link perceptions of the satisfaction with democracy and voter turnout are not unanimous on the direction of the relationship. Ezrow and Xesonakis(2013), for example, summarize the contradictory evidence regarding the influence of citizens' satisfaction with democracy on electoral

participation. "Citizens who are more satisfied with democracy tend to be more politically engaged, and thus they are more likely to turnout to vote (2013:2). The counter perspective proposes dissatisfaction generates demand for change in the electorate, which in turn mobilizes citizens to engage in, among other forms of participation, voting." (2013: 4)

Third, in electoral behavior research, psychological identification with a specific political party is considered central to the understanding of political behavior. Partisan loyalties exist as a pivotal part of an individual's belief system, acting as a political cue for other attitudes and behaviors. Party identification warrants such importance because it structures a person's view of the political world, provides cues for judging the political candidates and issues, shapes one's voting choice, and influences participation in the election. In established democracies, party ties also mobilize people to become political active. Similar to loyalty to a sports team, attachment to a political party encourages a person to become active in the political process to support her side. The 2012 American National Election Studies found that turnout was 26% higher among strong partisans than among independents. In addition, strong partisans are more likely to try to influence others, to display campaign materials, and to attend a rally (Dalton, 2016).

On the nexus between policy and political behavior, I put these three participatory attitudes as possible mechanisms linking generous ALMPs spending to greater participation by lower-status groups. If public policy succeeds in addressing the concerns

of lower-status people, improves their motives to be involved socially with others, and engenders attitudes toward government, I hypothesize that these groups may be more likely to feel efficacious, to be satisfied, and to feel close to one of the main political parties. In order to specify the expected relationship, the following hypotheses are stated:

H4-I: As the level of ALMPs spending increases, the effect of income on external efficacy is *significantly reduced*.

H4-II: As the level of ALMPs spending increases, the effect of income on the satisfaction with democracy is *significantly reduced*.

H4-III: As the level of ALMPs spending increases, the effect of income on the strength of partisan identification is *significantly reduced.*

Data and Measurement

Testing the model described above requires information about countries' labor market policies as well as the individual participatory attitudes. As has been noted in Chapter 4, the individual-level data analyzed below come from the CSES cumulative dataset. From this survey, the relevant survey items and macro-level variables were available for 97,366 respondents in 27 OECD countries over the period of 1996 to 2015.

This survey data were merged with macro-level measures of spending on ALMPs, as well as a number of macro-level control variables.

Dependent variables

Firstly, the concept of political efficacy is operationalized as an individual's belief that elections matter. It is best captured by answers to the CSES question "Does who people vote for make a difference?"[ii] While it has the five response options ranging from agreeing strongly to disagreeing strongly, I coded 1 for those who believe that the choice of candidates matters, and 0 for those who do not believe that the choice matters. The neutral category is considered a sign of low external political efficacy. Second, the CSES asks about respondents' degree of satisfaction with the way democracy works. Respondents can report being very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied. Respondents who were 'very' or 'fairly satisfied' were coded as 1, while those responded with 'not very satisfied' and 'not at all satisfied' were coded as 0. Third, respondents were asked if they usually think of themselves as close to any particular political party. Responses to this question were also coded as dummy variables: feeling close to a party was coded as 1, and not feeling close to any party was coded as 0. To ensure the consistency of analysis among participatory attitudes, political efficacy and satisfaction with democracy were recoded as dichotomized variables.

Independent Variables

As a key country-level independent variable, active labor market policies encompass a variety of measures aimed at improving beneficiaries' prospects of finding employment or increase their earning capacity. As has been discussed in Chapter 4, I focus on empowerment-oriented programs that contribute more to training, direct job creation, and employment incentives. Recent literature shows that disaggregating social expenditures yields valuable insights into welfare state policy (Kuitto, 2011). A state's commitment to such schemes has typically been measured in political science by calculating the proportion of the gross domestic product (GDP) devoted to them. The OECD provides annual data on spending as a percentage of GDP on these three types of ALMPs. Thus, the dependent variable is constructed by summing public expenditures on training measures, direct job creation, and employment incentives. These data exhibit significant variation among the countries in the sample as well as some change over time.[iii]

The central independent variable at the individual level is income. The impact of income was tested using a continuous measure with five values: from 1 to 5 income quintile. Age, age squared, gender, and education were also put into the regression models.

For the context-level control variables, a natural logarithm of purchasing power parity GDP per capita, electoral system, and majority status were integrated into the analysis to control for economic development, political institutions, and competitiveness of elections.

Estimation Method

Because the dataset combines information collected at the level of individuals and the level of countries, it has a hierarchical structure, with one level (individual respondents), nested within the other (countries). Thus, I assume that citizens in the same geographical unit (country) would be more similar to each other in terms of their attitudes. Multilevel modeling was developed to take into account the multi-level nature of the data and to remedy the statistical problems associated with traditional estimation techniques (e.g., clustering, non-constant variance, underestimation of standard errors). One particular way to guard against attributing effects to policies that are the result of characteristics of countries not captured by the independent variables or the result of aggregation effects is to specify the multilevel model as a random intercept model. Allowing the intercept to vary across countries enables us to model and estimate the unexplained variability in the intercepts across the level-2 units.

Results

In this chapter, I examine if ALMPs spending and income predict political efficacy, satisfaction with democracy, and closeness to a party. The multilevel models also tested whether ALMPs spending moderates the association of income with these outcome variables. If ALMPs affect participatory attitudes across the board, irrespective of an individual's income status, then the macro-level measure of labor market policies should matter equally for all populations. In contrast, if income status moderates the impact of ALMPs, then we should see stronger effects of labor market policies on the participatory attitudes of lower-status groups. In other words, this would suggest that there are small attitudinal differences between lower- and higher- status people in generous spending contexts.

Table 6-I reveals that the results of this analysis were mixed. With regard to political efficacy, the results showed that ALMPs systematically shape people's political efficacy. As expected, individuals in countries that spend more on ALMPs reported a greater sense of political efficacy (β = .06, p > .001). Interaction coefficients were negative and significant (β = -.005, p > .01), which implies that the association between individual resources and political efficacy becomes weaker in societies with a high level of ALMPs spending. In other words, an increase in ALMPs spending results in a smaller income slope. Consistent with the expectations, ALMPs boost political efficacy more powerfully among lower-status citizens.

In the case of satisfaction with democracy, the results did not conform to the expectation. The interaction between income and ALMPs spending was negative and not significant, which implies that satisfaction with democracy is not much different across income groups.

In regard to partisan identification, higher-status people are more likely than lower-status people to identify with parties, but they are not much more likely to identify with parties in countries with labor market policies geared towards empowerment. As expected, individuals in countries that spend more on ALMPs reported more psychological attachment to a political party ($\beta = .06$, $p > .01$). The interaction of income and ALMPs spending is negative, as hypothesized, and reaches statistical significance ($\beta = -.006$, $p > .001$).

Table 6-I. Multilevel models of Participatory Attitudes

	Political Efficacy	Satisfaction with Democracy	Partisan Identification
Individual-level variables			
Age	-.08**	-.22***	.12***
	(0.02)	(.03)	(.02)
Age squared	.01**	.03***	.01***
	(.02)	(.00)	(.00)
Gender	.02	.01	.13***
	(.01)	(.02)	(.01)
Education	.16***	.07***	.08***
	(.01)	(.01)	(.01)
Income	.1***	.15***	.09***
	(.01)	(.01)	(.01)
Country-level variables			
Log of GDP per capita	-.01	1.00***	-.24
	(.11)	(.23)	(.18)
PR	.03	-.26	-.48*
	(.11)	(.23)	(.19)
Majority Status	-.29	-.85	-.68
	(.41)	(.84)	(.68)
ALMP spending	.06***	.10**	.06
	(.02)	(.03)	(.02)
Income*ALMP spending	-.005**	-.001	-.006***
	(.002)	(.002)	(.002)
Constant	.19	-9.51***	1.53
	(1.15)	(2.35)	(1.9)
R	.04	.14	.1
	(.01)	(.02)	(.01)
Sigma_u	.12	.53	.35
	(.02)	(.09)	(.06)
Number of elections	78	78	78
Number of respondents	97366	97366	97366

*p <.05 **p <.01 ***p <.001. Entries are multilevel logistic regression coefficients (standard errors)

From the three main attitudes examined, political efficacy and closeness to a party showed the expected patterns. In societies with a lower level of ALMPs spending, there are larger differences in political efficacy and partisan identification between lower- and higher- status groups than in societies with more ALMPs spending.

In terms of estimated probabilities of voting, in a society with the minimum value of ALMPs spending, the predicted value of external efficacy of the lowest income group, if all other variables are held constant at their means, is 0.62, while the top income group has the predicted value of 0.71. The size of the gap between the two groups is about 0.09. On the contrary, there is almost no difference in external efficacy between the rich and the poor in countries with the maximum value of ALMPs spending. The predicted values of the external efficacy of the lowest and the highest income quintiles are 0.80 and 0.81, respectively.

With regard to partisan identification, on the one hand, in countries with the minimum value of ALMPs spending, a person of the lowest income quintile has an expected value of closeness to a party of 0.44, whereas a person of the top income quintile has the expected value of 0.53. The difference in the partisan identification of higher and lower status people is 0.09. On the other hand, in countries with the maximum value of ALMPs spending, a person of the bottom income quintile has an expected value of closeness to a party of 0.68, which slightly outweighs the expected value for the top income people. The difference is about -0.009.

Table 6-II. Effect of change in ALMPs spending level on individual participatory attitudes by income group.

	Political Efficacy		Closeness to Party	
	Minimum value of ALMPs	Maximum value of ALMPs	Minimum value of ALMPs	Maximum value of ALMPs
Bottom income	0.624***	0.80***	0.442***	0.684***
	(.01)	(.03)	(.03)	(.07)
Top income	0.709***	0.805***	0.53***	0.675***
	(.01)	(.03)	(.03)	(.08)

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.

Substantially, Figures 6-II and 6-III reveal that both high and low-income groups have a greater sense of efficacy and party identification if they live in countries that spend more on ALMPs. At the same time, the gap in political efficacy between high and low-income groups is larger in countries that spend less; it is much smaller or non-existent in countries that spend more on ALMPs. For example, though there is a significant gap in political efficacy between the top and bottom income quintile in a country with the lowest level of active labor market spending, this gap disappears in the most generous countries. Similarly, the less affluent in a country with the lowest commitment to ALMPs are significantly less likely to feel close to a party than the affluent in the same country. This contrasts with a much smaller gap in partisan identification for the top and bottom income quintile in the most generous country in terms of ALMP spending.

Figure 6-II. Marginal effect of ALMPs spending on Political Efficacy

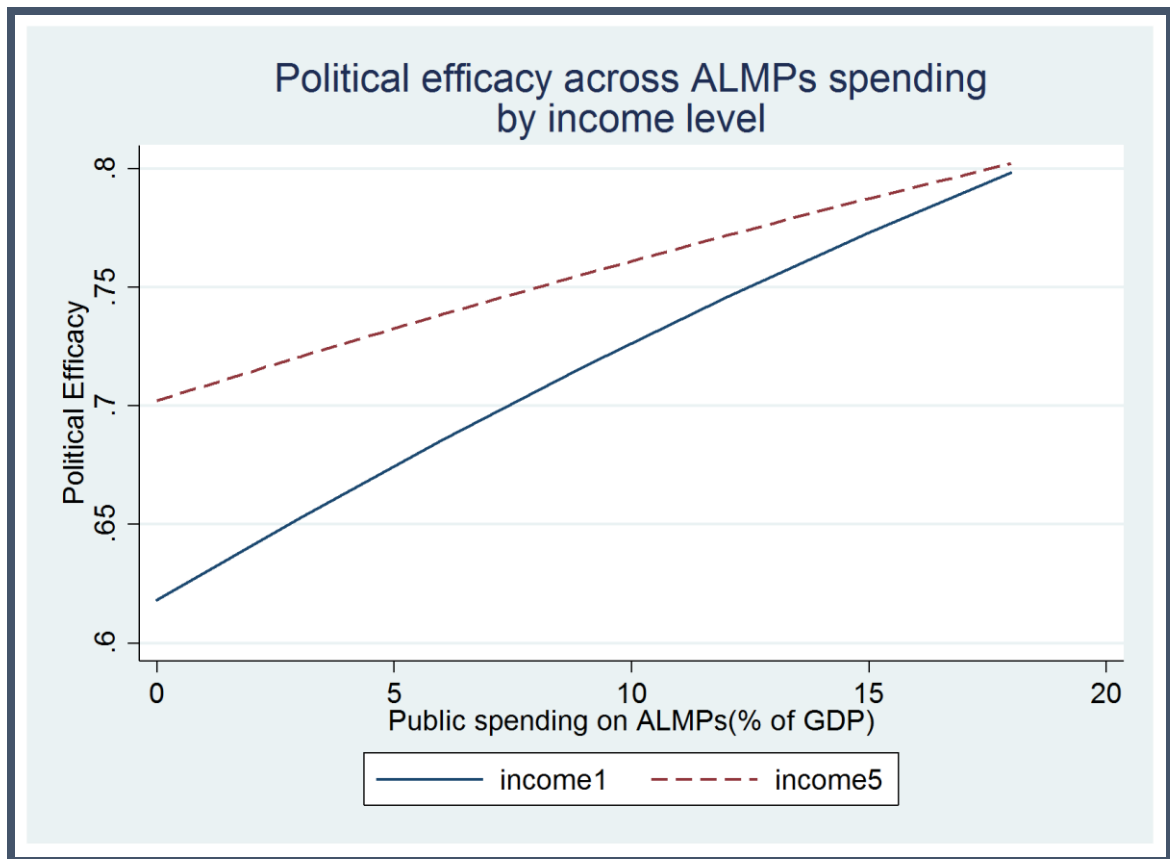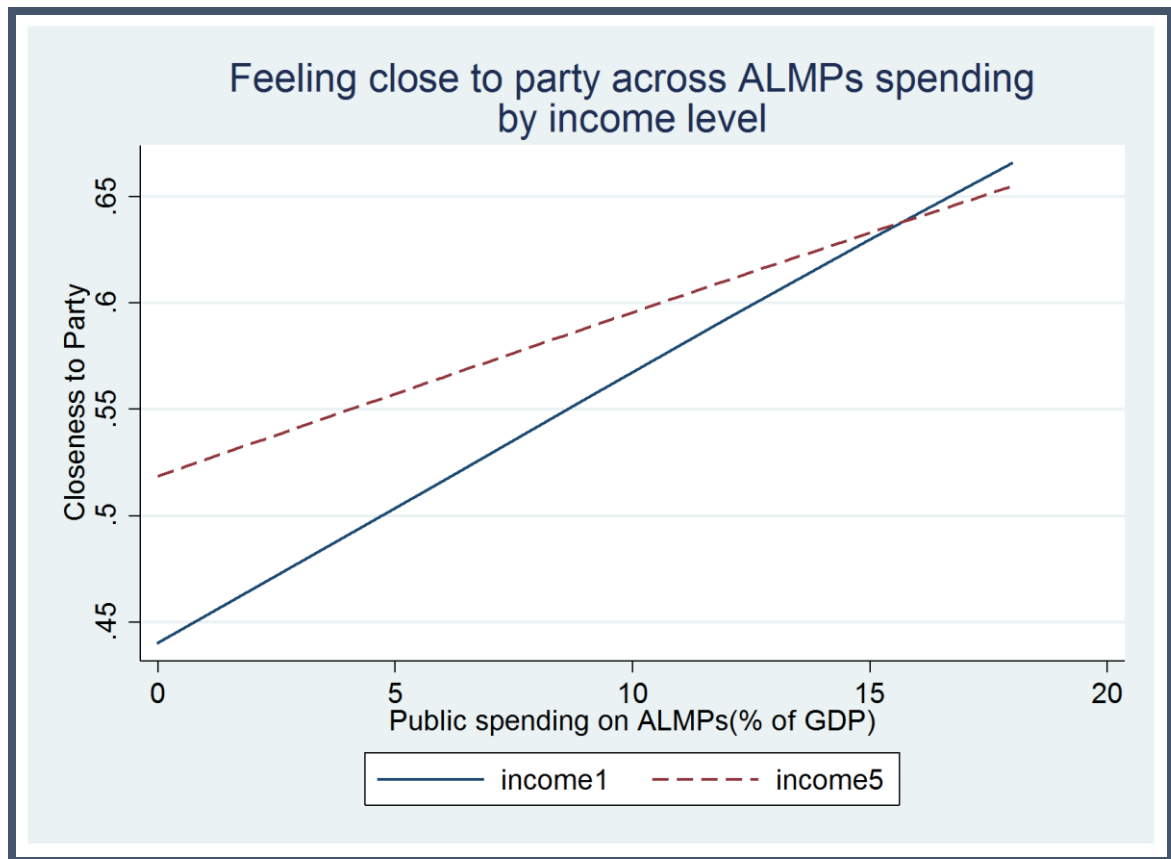Political efficacy across ALMPs spending by income level

Figure 6-III. Marginal effect of ALMPs spending on Partisan Identification

To summarize, these findings provide support that the strength of generally positive correlation between resources (income) and participatory attitudes does vary depending on the context in which an individual is situated. This means that the same type of individual in different settings of a risk-buffering policy context may have different incentives to participate in politics. Concerning the interpretation of the findings, since I rely on cross-sectional data only, I deal with correlations rather than causal effects. However, the reasoning also extends to possible causal links between contextual factors and people's incentives for raising their voices.

Summary

The impact of public policy on voter turnout is psychological – i.e., the policy context will first influence citizens' political engagement, which in turn affects their levels of participation. Because my hypothesis is based on the symbolic cues afforded by public policies, I tested their implications for psychological engagement, rather than for political activity. Symbolic cues are more likely to have direct effects on psychological orientations, and indirect effects on activity through the effects on engagement. Verba, Burns, and Schlozman (1997) define political engagement as "psychological orientations toward politics" and establish that engagement is a critical predictor of actual participation. I followed Verba et al. (1997) by focusing on three measures of psychological political engagement: political efficacy, satisfaction with democracy, and political identification.

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Rather than assuming the intermediate steps linking policy and behavior, I included adequate attitudinal variables into the model and tested the importance of social policy in moderating skewed dependent variables. I focused on the motivation part in the model translated as political efficacy, satisfaction with democracy, and partisan identification to understand why ALMPs spending might influence a citizen's decision to engage politically. Further, I suggested an indirect mechanism of public policy on political participation. This indirect effect can be specified as ALMPs spending that boosts an individual's sense of political efficacy and feeling close to a party. The findings show that ALMPs spending increases the motivation for citizens to participate politically by enhancing the belief that one can influence political decisions and a strong psychological attachment to a political party.

The mobilizing effect of ALMPs may operate not necessarily through enhancing traditional 'political' attitudes but implicitly through fostering subjective well-being and 'self'-efficacy as an autonomous being, and solidarity as a byproduct of social protection spreading risks around.

ii This question is the most direct measure of evaluations of the efficacy of a vote available, and thus how the electoral system translates votes into seats. In terms of face validity, this question asks respondents to evaluate the meaningfulness of voting, a component of elections as an accountability mechanism, and therefore, should be the most direct measure of the feelings of efficacy that can be attributed to the act of voting (Karp & Banducci, 2008: 319).

iii For details, see e.g. Rueda (2007)

Conclusion

This dissertation has studied differences in the levels of unequal participation across post-industrial democracies and the circumstances under which political inequality due to the unequal distribution of socioeconomic resources is reduced or intensified. As shown in Chapter 2, there is considerable variation in turnout inequality across OECD countries. The fact that unequal participation is not universal suggests that equal voter turnout depends on the specific aspects of the context. Along with a growing body of literature on the interaction between micro and macro determinants of turnout, this study shows that the context in which elections are held has profound implications for who participates in politics.

While previous studies have focused mainly on institutional factors from the input-side of the democratic process, there are fewer studies that discuss the role of the output-side factors in shaping citizens' attitudes and behaviors. In this dissertation, I investigated the role of social policies in modifying the individual participatory attitudes and propensity to vote. I addressed the following questions: Can social policy impact on the social stratification of political participation? How are public policies related to their ability to decrease the influence of socioeconomic resources on political participation? From the policy feedback literature, I hypothesized that, due to the integrative nature of

the social policies, individuals are more likely to participate politically in countries with a greater focus on labor market activation. Against the background of two competing theoretical predictions on participation/nonparticipation, the aim of this study was to explore if income-related turnout inequalities are moderated in outsider-friendly welfare systems, which promote social inclusion, by greater public expenditures on active labor market policies.

The multivariate analysis implied that social policy context has a conditioning effect on the relationship between income and voting. Viewing income as a vital resource for political participation is entirely plausible because income status is linked to material and psychological attributes for the ability and motivation to vote (Harder & Krosnick, 2008; Verba et al., 1995). From this point of view, the positive relationship at the individual-level was expected. With a better income, the likelihood to participate in elections also grows. Yet, we also need to consider the larger context and examine if and how the effects of income on political participation vary across countries. I assumed that such variations could be found among countries with more and less spending on active labor market programs. The empirical results showed that at the macro level, the countries with more generous spending on empowerment-oriented ALMPs had a smaller turnout gap between the rich and the poor. In line with Franklin et al. (1996: 321), who argue that individual-level differences only have room within the limits of institutional and political factors, this study demonstrates that the effect of individual resources, such as income, is substantially attenuated when social policy context is oriented towards the empowerment and reintegration of a disadvantaged group. This finding corroborates

recent studies (e.g. Makszin & Schneider, 2010; Stadelmann-Steffen, 2011; Shore, 2013; Anduiza, 2002; Mau et al., 2012; Gallego, 2015) which have determined that social protection, in terms of overall social spending, can suppress the social gradient (income or education) in participatory incentives and behaviors.

There was a definite positive and direct correlation between the indicators of ALMPs spending and turnout. While higher spending on ALMPs seems to have a bolstering effect that spans across all social groups, poor citizens show a significant increase in turnout. The 'engagement by empowerment' hypothesis was supported since larger expenditure on ALMPs reduced the turnout gap between the rich and the poor. More investment in labor market activation thus provides the less well-off with greater resources and incentives to vote. As psychological mechanisms mediating between public policy and political participation, I also tested whether ALMPs spending weakens the impact of income on participatory attitudes such as political efficacy, satisfaction with democracy, and partisan identification. Indeed, individuals in countries with a greater commitment to ALMPs reported stronger political efficacy and psychological attachment to a political party. Taken together, the results show that the positive impact of labor market policies on people's participatory attitudes and electoral turnout is more powerful among the socially underprivileged.

Along with ALMPs spending, childcare services also tap into similar policy instruments to activate women with young children across post-industrial democracies. I

hypothesized that higher public spending on childcare services has a boosting effect on the participation of women, thereby reducing the gender gap in turnout. Using the same dataset and multilevel model with cross-level interactions, I showed that women have a higher predicted probability of voting in countries that spend more on childcare policy than in countries that spend less on such a policy.

This study has important implications for the literature on comparative political behaviors and policy research due to its examination of the ways in which welfare state policies shape individual participation. By investigating the connections among welfare policies, income status, political attitudes, and behaviors, this study conveys what it means for public policies to work in systematic ways. While many have studied the effects of specific policies for target groups in single countries, fewer studies have applied the policy feedback framework to broader policy sets across many countries. By employing the ideas that have been tested for the United States to a more diverse setting, I systematically investigated how the welfare state context may modify the relationship between income and voting. Furthermore, this study highlights that the positive consequences of ALMPs spending are not of equal magnitude across all individuals. Based on these findings, the potential of welfare states to counter-steer social stratification in political engagement must not be underestimated.

From a theoretical perspective, this work stands in contrast to theories of class conflict, which predict that working class individuals will become frustrated with their

unfair economic conditions, and eventually engage in a forceful rebellion against the ruling class. Instead, this research suggests the other scenario, which means that under unequal context, lower class individuals become less likely to act forcefully to protect their personal and political interests, due to their experience of reduced participatory attitudes. In this fashion, the evidence aligns with research on relative power theory. My work adds to this literature by suggesting that lack of socioeconomic resources and accompanying reduced participatory attitudes lead lower income members of society to decreased political participation, and by implication, more tacit acceptance of status quo.

In addition, this research casts some doubt on the conclusion reached in previous studies, which argue that the proportional system has a boosting effect of turnout. While a wider range of parties under the proportional system increases the choices available to voters, it can be argued that political fragmentation under a proportional system may augment complexity when choosing the option. Also, the probability of a coalition government under proportional system tends to make elections less decisive. Hence, this study expects that a more ideologically fragmented political system to decrease the propensity to vote in particular among less educated and low income voters, and consequently the impact of income on turnout to be stronger as the number of parties increases. While this study corroborates other institutionalist arguments, specifically that compulsory voting and close elections matter, the finding on the proportional system constitutes as a corrective to the institutionalist literature.

From a practical standpoint, the consequences of these activation measures for society go beyond their economic role in managing labor market outcomes and also help to sustain social inclusion. In general, this research can be applied to other government measures. That is to say, my study suggests that policy efforts to provide status security and reduce psychological burdens for the socially disadvantaged are desirable to mitigate the distortion of individual resources on political participation. This finding stresses that equal participation is something attainable in a democratic system. The potential for welfare states to counteract social stratification in political engagement must not be underestimated, indeed it might be a promising intervention.

This work has promise to advance research on turnout inequality, but there are also several limitations to consider. This study has shown that income can be a strong predictor of voting or it can be largely irrelevant. While I singled out public spending on labor market activation as the characteristic of the context that can help reduce inequalities in participation, the aspects of the environment that cause individuals to act in different ways across contexts remains open to question. To determine which particular characteristic of the context is important, researchers usually employ a regression framework in which the behavior of interest is regressed against the preferred contextual feature. However, due to numerous differences, the number of potential omitted variables is substantial. Furthermore, social, institutional, and political features tend to be bundled together. What is it exactly about the context that affects participation? Our knowledge about which context in particular affects political

participation and who participates is still quite limited due in large part to these identification challenges (Gallego, 2015: 196).

The results are also a reminder of the loopholes of correlational analyses and the importance of not drawing conclusions from correlational evidence too quickly. Income almost always turns out to be a significant coefficient in regression models for political participation, but understanding what this coefficient really means is a hard task. Many researchers are too quick to claim that significant effects of income signal direct causal effects of income. From standard regression models using one-shot cross-sectional data, it will continue to be almost impossible to understand what the significant coefficient for income actually means. In addition, the causal effect of income and public policy is hard to isolate due to confounding factors - i.e., variables possibly related to both independent and dependent variables (Persson, 2013).

By adopting a policy feedback approach, this study also assumes that public policy fosters participatory attitudes and engagement. That is, causality runs from policy to political behavior. Yet, it is possible that countries' spending on labor market activation or childcare services is not entirely exogenous. If countries with greater electoral participation also invest more in social policies, estimates of the effect of activation measures on political participation will be biased. While this study have interpreted the findings in light of policy feedback mechanisms, reverse causality cannot be excluded. Reverse causation refer to a two-way causal relationship in a loop. This

endogeneity problem plaguing many studies of policy feedback and welfare states present here as well. The safe way to generate causal claims is to use randomized experiments. Unfortunately, randomization is often infeasible in social science settings. In addition, depending on the phenomenon under investigation, results might not generalize from laboratory to the real world. Another identification strategy is the use of instrumental variables. The idea behind an instrument is to separate out the part of any observed relationship between the social policy and political behaviors that is spurious from the part of the relationship between social policy and political behaviors that is causal. The success of an instrument and the consequent instrumental variables analysis depends on the ability of the instrument to identify the portion of the variation in the treatment that is not contaminated by other causal factors that co-vary with the treatment and affect the outcome. However, the more plausible explanation is that cause and effect interact, and that hypotheses contribute to the formation of social solidarity. Social policies and political participation appear to exist in a iterative relationship. While high levels of citizen participation were certainly conducive to the establishment of generous welfare states regimes such as in Scandinavia, the strong relationship between higher levels of participation and empowerment-oriented social policies remains even while controlling for other input factors related to the electoral system.

Even the studies arguing that income has a direct causal effect on participation say very little about the causal mechanism. Moreover, they seldom show evidence regarding how the relationship can be explained. Further work needs to clarify the mechanisms that connect policies to participatory inequality. I tentatively explored

psychological mechanisms through which public policy may foster the participation of low-status people. However, it stopped short of solving the puzzle. The analysis of mediation mechanisms is challenging. An unbiased estimation would require manipulating both cause and mechanism experimentally and also making a set of additional assumptions (Imai et al., 2011). Causal mechanisms linking public policy for social protection to the political behavior of the poor remain theoretically and empirically under-developed in this study. Identifying the context-level characteristics leading to high participatory inequality and its causal mechanisms will also contribute to elevating the qualities of democracies.

Future research could expand the current analysis in several respects. First, participatory inequality for social groups other than those defined by income, such as ethnicity, could be analyzed. Second, other forms of political participation could be included, considering that non-institutionalized participation has the potential to mobilize the socially excluded more effectively in the political process. A focus on whether political inequality is still problematic in emerging forms of participation will be an interesting extension of this study.

Third, a detailed case-study analysis of countries that are left unexplained by my analysis - deviant cases, i.e., cases with small participatory inequality not captured by the level of ALMPs spending - could reveal functionally equivalent but overlooked variables.

Finally, using longitudinal data, investigating how changes in social policy within the same country may have an impact on electoral turnout across income groups in the long run is certainly an avenue for further research.

To conclude, why should we care about unequal turnout? Whose voices get heard and whose remain quiet is indeed a cause for concern. Unequal participation and the resulting unequal representation have the potential to undermine the legitimacy of electoral and legislative outcomes. If this study has examined the 'feed' part of policy feedback effects, this concern touches upon the 'back' element – i.e., the policies that result from unequal participation and representation. While I investigated how policies affect political participation across contexts, another important question unaddressed here concerns the extent to which the biased representation process results in policies that neglect the interests of lower-status groups and exacerbate their standing in society. If socially disadvantaged groups do not participate at rates that match those of other groups, then policy makers do not have incentives to be equally responsive to their interests, preferences, and needs. In sum, turnout inequality can affect who gets elected, which public policies governments adopt, and how governments allocate public resources in ways that deviate from what would happen if everybody voted and governments were responsive to all citizens as political equals. Unequal turnout undermines the ideal of political equality.

This dissertation has attempted to advance our understanding of the levels, the reasons, and the mechanisms of unequal participation from a comparative perspective. Economic exclusion has a ripple effect as a result of begetting political exclusion. Lower-status groups come to realize that the political system is not responsive to their demands and that participation does not change outcomes, rendering it meaningless, which causes them to vote at lower rates. I have argued that state's investment in labor market activation can help equalize participation across income groups. This claim leads to specific advice for policy makers. A possible solution to the problem of participatory distortion is to try to activate the nonparticipants by helping them overcome material and motivational deficiencies through countervailing incentives. This study showed that there is a positive correlation between social protection for labor market outsiders and the participation of the poor. To attenuate a distorting effect of socioeconomic resources upon political participation, the main findings of this study imply that policy efforts to provide status security and reduce psychological burdens for the socially disadvantaged are desirable to alleviate the distorting effect of individual resources on political participation. As Offe (2014: 17-18) aptly points out, "Political equality must not only be legally (de jure) provided for, but socially and politically implemented. (de facto) … Political inequality must thus be understood as being a consequence (and not just a premise) of the making of public policy." Participatory inequality must be comprehended as a condition that is inherently produced and reproduced by the conduct of public policy. Therefore, the practical implication for redressing participatory inequality is that the suppliers of public policies should first restore, reassert and consistently demonstrate some of their trust-engendering governing capacity.

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